

"SEFON, WHAT IS THE MATTER?" SHE ASKED.

THE SWORD OF FATE; OR, THE HEADSMAN'S DOOM.

CHAPTER V.

A CONVERSATION ON THE PAST.

THE two cavaliers rode away together from the armourer Strikehard's.
"In the names of Hebe, Venus, and the Graces, we have come upon a treasure, my good Vipont. What eyes! What hair! and such lips. Oh! roses and honeysuckles!"

For the week ending AUG. 27, 1888.

And a skin! Oh! lilies of the field, ye cannot compare yourselves to the whiteness of her skin. And her name is Esmée. That smacks of the sunny land of France. If old Rowley knew of her, he would become a wooer. Faith, shall we tell him?"

This was my lord Rochester's comment upon Esmée.

Vipont did not reply for a moment to his enthusiastic speech, for he was apparently lost in deep thought, but the last suggestion seemed to rouse him.

"Yes, Rochester; if you wish to have the king's death on your conscience, just tell him of this fair girl," he said.

"How so?"

"Didst note her father?"

"Why, yes; what of him?"

"Well, if any man trifled with his daughter, I should think he would not be long in the land of the living. He is a surly and ill-favoured knave."

"Ha! ha! Vipont, didst thou too cast the eyes of longing upon that sweet rosebud?" laughed Rochester. "If so, I charge you to be wary, for at home, methinks, thou hast a lady who is, I think, possessed by the green-eyed monster."

"My lord! do you wish to insult me?" cried Vipont, angrily, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Tut, tut, man, do not be so hasty; I did but jest. But are you afraid of this armourer?"

"No—why?"

"Because you looked, when you beheld him and his son, as if you had an uneasy conscience."

"How did I look?" asked Vipont, inquiringly, and trying to be unconcerned, although it was evident he was ill at ease under the scrutiny of his friend.

"Look!—why man, you looked as if the ghost of a man had appeared to you whom you had once sent to his last account. Terror was in your eyes. Is there something in your past, Vipont, that will not bear the light of day?"

"My lord," said Vipont, with a cool sneer; "is your past so clear that you can throw insinuations? Ha! I have you there. Now here I am at my house, and here we part. Your armourer is a mystery, and I will find out the secret he conceals, and you can do the same. As for fearing him, that I do as much as you do yourself. Good day."

And touching his hat he rode away, leaving Rochester musing in the road.

"That fellow has a past I should like to unravel; and as for my lady, his wife—let me see, who was she? Ah, the widow of Sir Guy Tristram, who was murdered. Can Vipont have done the deed? I'll ask old Rowley about it; he is the one who knows the secrets."

And with that the careless nobleman went his way.

Meanwhile, Sir Seton Vipont rode on to his house in Aldersgate-street, a huge pile, built partly of brick and partly of wood.

It was surrounded by an ample garden, enclosed by a wall, and stood in its own grounds.

Two massive gates opened on to a shady lawn, and through these gates Sir Seton rode, lost in profound thought.

He dismounted and found his way at once to his wife's rooms.

It was as Rochester had said: he had married the widow of Sir Guy Tristram, but he had not the revenue of the estates of that baronet, for it was found that Sir Guy had left an heir to the property—that there was no proof of his death, and therefore the estates were administered by the Crown, the widow receiving an ample income from them.

This was a sore point with Sir Seton Vipont, who had had the title of baronet bestowed upon him by the king, who had disliked Sir Guy Tristram on account of his independent spirit on his restoration.

It was whispered that the widow of Sir Guy Tristram had been a favourite of the king, and

he would have invested her with full power over the estates, had not the Earl of Clarendon opposed the scheme for some reason best known to himself, and of which we shall hear more anon.

Sir Seton Vipont, as we have said, sought his wife.

He felt she could advise him. She had the better brain, and in all emergencies he was in the habit of consulting her.

To speak rightly, Vipont was greatly disturbed in mind.

The crime he had committed long years ago had never been brought to the light of justice.

It had slept all those years, and now at last an accident had aroused all the passions of the past by his visit to the armourer.

He thought he beheld the dead man, with his handsome face white in death, lying in that chamber at Oakbourne. How well he remembered it. It seemed but yesterday.

He entered his wife's presence.

She had hardly altered.

Still in the prime of life, her haughty features retained their original witch-like beauty.

She was seated in a low chair by the window, and near her were two boys—the eldest in his tenth year, the youngest about eight.

She looked up as her husband entered the room.

She saw from his features that something had occurred to him.

"Seton, what is the matter?" she asked, whilst the two boys ceased their play.

"I wish to speak with you, Eleanor," he said, hoarsely.

"Seton and Carr, go to your own room."

The boys obeyed.

They stood in awe of their mother, who ruled them as she did everyone in that household.

When the husband and wife were alone, Vipont seated himself in front of his wife.

"Now," she said, "what is it?"

"Eleanor, I have met with an adventure to-day. I went with Rochester to visit an armourer named Strikehard, who lives near the Tower, and if I did not see the face and form of Guy Tristram again, I am not a living man of sense."

She started slightly.

"Nonsense," she replied; "you are scared by the memory of the past."

"But I saw a youth who would be of the same age as young Tristram now, and this armourer calls him his son, and the fellow himself bears a remarkable resemblance to the Tristram family."

"But there was no relative left after Sir Guy, and as for the boy, the mud at the bottom of the moat has hidden our secret. So do not fear any phantom resemblance."

"I do not fear; but I have often told you that there was some mystery on that night. As I rode away from the inn I saw a stranger approach the stable, and in it was a horse that was not there on my arrival. Besides, when I went back to Oakbourne, it was given out that the innkeeper, Dram's horse, had disappeared, and it was given out that it had been stolen, or that he had ridden away that night in order to avoid the payment of his debts."

"He is at the bottom of the moat, and I know my dagger made sure work of it. Bah! do not be alarmed," said Lady Vipont.

"Well, I will hope for the best; but there is one thing that often puzzles me," said Vipont.

"What is it?"

"Do you remember the fate of my brother Carr?"

"Very well. He was killed on the steps of Whitehall by a stranger who escaped," she replied.

"True; and the murderer has never been discovered. I have often thought the blow that slew him was intended for me."

"Why?"

"Because Carr was not at enmity with any-

one. He was like me in face and figure, and the murder was committed with such a vicious intent. The king would have caused more search to be made for the villain, had it not been for my Lord Clarendon."

"Ah, he it was who sought my ruin at Court, and he is the only man I hate and fear," said Eleanor Vipont.

"His fall would be our rise," said Vipont, reflectively.

"And he shall fall," she said. "Now let the matter rest, and do not be alarmed at shadows."

During this recital, Sir Seton Vipont had not made any allusion to Esmée.

He had carefully avoided mentioning her name, for he knew the jealous disposition of his wife.

But during all that day he could not banish the fair face of the girl from his mind.

She had fascinated him, and he vowed at whatever cost he would make her his.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARMOURER'S VISITOR—THE SECRET BAFFLES OUR HERO.

Lyon Strikehard noticed that after the visit of the cavaliers, his father was more than usually morose.

During one day his father went to a room at the top of the house, where he locked himself in.

A dull, grating sound was heard to proceed from this room.

Lyon thought his father had a workshop here in which he secretly wrought his swords, away from the view of his men and apprentices.

On questioning Esmée, she confirmed this view, saying—

"Very seldom does he go into this room, and when he does he is very sad; he always goes there before he leaves home for a time."

Lyon said nothing in reply to this, but on the evening of the day his father was closeted in the secret chamber, and the workshop was closed, there came a knock at the door.

Lyon opened it.

He saw a cavalier, shrouded in hat and cloak, and what he could catch of his features rather impressed him with the visitor.

The features were fine and thoughtful, yet severe, and the bearing of the man was noble and dignified.

He asked to see the armourer, and Lyon ushered him into the sitting-room, where his father sat lost in thought.

On seeing the stranger, the armourer arose and bent low to him.

"Leave us, my son and daughter, I have business to transact with this gentleman," said Strikehard.

They accordingly left him.

"Who is the visitor?" asked Lyon of his sister.

"It is the stranger who comes when father goes away."

"He seems to expect him?"

"Yes; and he it is who makes our father happier."

The brother and sister sat in the big kitchen with the servant, whilst the interview was taking place in the parlour between the armourer and his guest.

Let us see what passed.

"Be seated, my lord, I pray you," said the armourer.

The visitor bowed, and sat down in the arm-chair.

"Well, Strikehard, once more you will have a disagreeable duty to perform, and I wish that I could assist you to avoid it, but I cannot. The crime is high treason and coupled with a murder."

"Who is it?"

"Lord St. Maur."

"I know him not; and that is some comfort to me."

"Well, I will see what I can do to get you released from this awful duty. But the king is obdurate; he will not easily pardon."

"Ten years' penance is enough, my lord, I think."

"It is."

"Well, I have had visitors here, who will cause me trouble I am afraid, and they are from the court."

"Who are they?"

"My lord of Rochester."

"Ah! the king's friend and my enemy; he swears I got him banished the court for one of his mad pranks, but I did not. My power is on the wane, Strikehard; I feel that I shall lose the favour of the king, and then I shall not be able to assist you."

"God's will be done, my lord," said Strikehard, solemnly. "You know the secret of my unhappy life; you have been my protector, have rescued me from a shameful death, and have enabled me to be the protector of the pure and innocent. For all these things I am indebted to you, and if you wish to command my services I will serve you to the death."

"I know it, my poor friend. God only knows the great ones, and the rulers of mankind have but few friends they can count upon in the hour of need, but now, I wish to know has the boy returned from France?"

"A week since."

"Is he what you desire?"

"He is, my lord, noble, generous, and brave; and on his arrival here he saved my lord of Rochester."

Strikehard briefly related the event of which the reader knows.

"Well, he has a friend in Rochester for a time, that is as long as he does not clash with his interest."

"Exactly so; but I was about to tell your lordship that the person who accompanied Rochester was none other than Sir Seton Vipont."

"Ah!"

"And he saw Esmée, and the two gallants will come again to my peaceful household, and, perhaps the king, and I shall be undone."

"This is bad, but it can be remedied, I think."

"How so, my lord?"

"I will take Esmée into my household," said the visitor.

"You are very good, my lord, but I do not wish to be separated from the being I love, and who loves me," said the armourer, sadly.

"Neither shall you; keep her here, my friend, you have need of her, and you can protect her. But the boy must make his way in the world. He must not be hidden, he is of good blood. Let him be a page in my household, where I can watch over him, and be like a father to him."

"Do you not think he will make himself enemies there?"

"No, for I will keep him under my eye. He shall with me to court."

"Sir Seton Vipont has seen him, and when he beheld him he started back as if he had seen the ghost of a murdered man. It was all I could do to restrain myself; I would have plunged my dagger into his heart as I did in that of —"

The armourer was fearfully agitated as he spoke, and he suddenly paused, drew himself up, and paced the chamber with hurried steps.

"Be calm, friend," said the visitor, laying his hand upon the arm of the grief-stricken man.

"Your trials will come to an end, believe me; the wicked shall not triumph long, it is written so and I believe it. Now I will move heaven and earth to release you of the compact; the king he will listen to reason."

"My lord, I have a legacy of vengeance left me, and I must fulfil my destiny."

The Earl of Clarendon, for it was the chief minister of the king, who had come to see the humble armourer, took both of the latter's hands.

"Listen, Claude; I have known you long; you were a brave soldier, and we were exiles together in Holland; all the dangers you faced were greater than those you have now to encounter. Courage then, and battle through them."

"Ah, my lord, but there was no infamy in my life. When I kill now I feel like a murderer; but in the days of old it was in open fight, where honour was to be won."

"Now, Claude, come be a man; you but fulfil a duty, a great duty, for it was to rescue the innocent who had no protector but you, that you sacrificed your life," said the Earl.

"True it was so, but it was the king who captured me, and he kept my secret, and for that I thank him, but not for the alternative he offered me, which was life or death."

"Forget the past, Claude, forget it; and now let me see the boy, eh and the girl, well I remember her mother," said Clarendon.

"If you wish to see the boy, my lord, I will call him, but I fear for him at the court."

"He will hold his own, and now let no more be said; I will try to release you from the bond you hate, and serve you."

The armourer again took the hand of his patron and raised it to his lips, and then he went out into the passage and called:

"Esmée, Lyon, come here."

In a few moments the brother and sister were in the room, and Lyon gazed with involuntary respect upon the countenance of the visitor.

"My dear Lyon," said the armourer, "I must present you to the kindest friend man ever found. This is the Earl of Clarendon, who has kindly condescended to take you into his household, you are to be his page—"

"And secretary. Come here, Lyon; your father is a brave man, one whom I respect, who never did a dishonourable action, and for his sake you shall be guided and protected by me."

The Earl held out his hand.

"I thank you, my lord, for your kindness, and all my devotion shall be given to your service," said Lyon.

There was a bold, proud spirit about the lad that pleased the Earl, and he patted him on the shoulder approvingly.

"Well spoken, boy, and your outfit shall be discharged by me," said the Earl; "and this is Esmée?"

The girl came up blushing like a rose, and dropped a curtsy to the Earl, who did not pat her cheek condescendingly as he would have done to one beneath him in rank, but arose and bowed to her, and took her hand as he would have done to the first lady in the land.

"Fair mistress, you are very pretty, and now it is time that I should depart; Master Lyon I see you to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow, my lord; remember my duty," said Strikehard.

"True, I had forgotten; the day after. Now, children, I would speak to your father, and heaven bless you."

They took a respectful leave of the Earl, and left the room.

Lyon was greatly pleased with his reception by the Earl.

He had heard from the caller's lips that his father was honoured and respected by him.

Why then should he pry into his secrets, for no doubt they were nothing to be ashamed of?

He retired to rest easier in mind, and slept soundly.

Lyon was up when the sun rose.

No one was stirring yet, and he leaned over the garden railings, and looked on the various craft lining the river, intent upon the scene.

Suddenly he heard the click of the latch of the garden gate, and looking up he beheld the tall form of his father, shrouded in a long cloak that went down to his heels, and a broad hat covered his face.

He was clad in a costume of the deepest black, and he carried under his arm a packet

closed in leather that looked like a case of swords, or something of a similar form.

Lyon did not speak as his father did not observe him, and he saw him leave the garden evidently lost in his own thoughts, for his head was bent down, and his step was slow and solemn.

Lyon watched him as he went along, and he saw that he bent his steps to the Tower.

He saw him enter the gloomy gates of the prison, and disappear within them.

For over an hour the boy watched whether he would return, and he did not. One hour passed, two, and still he did not see that his father left the Tower.

He was called in to breakfast by Esmée, and the moment the meal was over he returned to watch the gates of the Tower, to see whether his father would return.

Esmée said nothing concerning her father's absence.

Lyon did not question her, but kept his own counsel over what he had seen.

The hours passed on, and still Lyon stood there on the watch, filled with varying emotions.

Presently he beheld large throngs of men and women fill up the Tower Hill.

Lyon became interested.

Why was this vast concourse of people congregated here?

This was what he desired to know, and then he suddenly remembered the Earl of Rochester's words, that a peer of the realm was to be executed for murder and treason.

Without thinking what he was about to do, Lyon leaped the fence and hastened on with the crowd to Tower Hill.

The crowd increased.

The halberdiers of the Tower kept a clear way to the scaffold, and Lyon's eyes were strained to see the arrival of the dismal procession on its exit from the Tower.

Presently the solemn tolling of a funeral bell was heard, and then the gates opened, and the soldiers were seen riding in advance of the cart that contained the criminal, led by the Lieutenant of the Tower and some trumpeters.

The crowd was surging to and fro, and highly excited.

As the cart rolled along with the victim of public vengeance, Lyon looked interested. He saw the procession stop at the foot of the scaffold, and following the condemned was a tall man dressed in a tight fitting suit of black, and who had his arms bare and wore a mask, and a velvet skull cap, and carried an axe. This was the headsman.

As Lyon gazed at him, he thought he saw something in this man which was strangely familiar to him, but he was too far away to see exactly.

The man stood like a statue, with his head bent and his hands resting on the handle of his bright axe.

A deep hush fell on the assembly, as the doomed man knelt and placed his head upon the block.

In a few seconds the gleaming axe flashed in the sunlight and descended on the neck of the criminal, severing the head from the body at one blow.

A sickening sensation crept through the veins of our hero.

He felt blinded and dazed, and tried to struggle out of the crowd, as he saw the gory head held up to the view of the roaring multitude, but he was hemmed in on all sides.

But at last he managed to get clear, and he hastened home with feelings terribly agitated.

What could his father do in the Tower of London?

True he was the armourer; he might have gone to the Tower with the axe for the headsman.

Still, the man who had acted in that capacity bore a striking resemblance in outward form to his father, though he could not see his face.

Filled with doubt he reached home, but he did not betray his feelings to his sister.

His father did not return on that day. It was long after midnight when Lyon heard his father enter the house and ascend the stairs.

To his surprise his father opened his door, and shaded the light with his hand.

Lyon pretended to be asleep.

"Sleep on thou child of fate;" said the armorer. Peace be with thee, now and for ever."

Lyon felt a kiss on his cheek and then he was alone.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

Amongst the crowd who viewed the execution on that day was a thickset individual with a frightfully blotched face, and a shock head of hair.

But his eyes wandered occasionally to a group of cavaliers who were stationed on a raised platform in order to view the execution.

There was one who seemed to rivet all his attention, and when the execution was over, he kept close to the cavaliers.

The dissolute and ragged man followed Sir Seton Vipont, for it was he, even to the gate of his own house, and, when there, he suddenly



"THE EARL HELD OUT HIS HAND TO THE YOUTH."

said in whining accents of mock humility:

"Good day, Sir Seton Vipont; the world has used you very well since last I had the honour of seeing your good worship, many years ago."

Sir Seton turned.

"Who art thou, fellow?" he asked in a scornful tone.

"Ha—ha—ha! am I so altered that you do not know me?"

"I do not know you," he said.

"What! not your old friend?"

"Begone, fellow; you are mad or drunk, and if you dare to accost me again I will hand you over to the watch."

On hearing these words, the man's whole countenance changed, and an expression of hatred came into his eyes that made Sir Seton pause.

"Ah! you threaten me, do you Seton Vipont? I shall be handed over to the watch shall I? Very good; but when I am treated thus, you and your lady wife shall sleep in Newgate."

"Villain! what do you mean?" inquired Vipont, half drawing his sword.

For the first time a thrill of fear came into Vipont's eyes.

(To be continued. Commenced in No. 27.)

PUCK THE PEDLAR.

"THOU hast come on a bootless errand, Master Walter. Get thee home, and stick close to the plough; thou may'st one day become rich; but I cannot entertain thy suit now."

Thus spoke Ralph Skelton, the rich yeoman of Wyvil's Croft, to a rustic but handsome youth, who stood with his cap in his hand in an attitude of profound deference.

The words of the farmer fell on the youth's ear like a sentence of excommunication. He fumbled his thumb cap, and shuffled his feet about, while he essayed in vain to stammer a reply. The farmer observed his uneasiness, and continued,

"Pr'ythee teaze me not again with thy silly requests. It becomes not the daughter of Ralph Skelton to wed a poor boy who can scarcely purchase a mass for his father's soul!"

"Alas, it is too true!" replied the youth. "I am poor indeed; but I covet not your gold, Master Skelton; give me but your sweet daughter, and—"

"And thou wilt make her a beggar, like a mad boy as thou art," interrupted the farmer. "Away with thee, or thou wilt make me forget myself."

"Be not angry, good Master Skelton; consider my suit, and let me not die in despair, as I most surely shall an' you refuse me."

"Now out upon thee for a most graceless coistrel!" cried the old man, stamping with rage at the youth's importunity. "Do'st thou think I have refused Alan the miller, and Master William the reeve, and Jenkin the rich mercer at the cross, to take up with a son-in-law without a noble in his pouch? Get thee gone, boy, or by St. Bridget, Dick the shepherd shall try if there be virtue in a crab-tree staff."

Young Walter blushed with resentment at this menace; but his love for the old man's daughter forbade a harsh reply.

"You treat me uncourteously," said he, mournfully. "I

wot not that my father's ancient comrade would speak thus to his son. Who bore you on his back out of the press at Agincourt, sir, when hard blows were gotten cheaply?"

"Thy father, truly, Walter," said the old man, in a much milder tone; "the service was both kind and timely, but what boots it now? Am I to doom my daughter to—"

"You will not doom her, sir," interrupted the youth, eagerly catching at the old man's softened tone. "Ask her an' I have not her heart, Master Skelton; ask her that."

Again the farmer's face flushed with anger. "She is a perverse and disobedient quean," cried he, wrathfully; "and thou hast taught her a bad lesson. Begone, sirrah! out o' my house, or I'll take a course with thee!"

Master Skelton turned on his heel, and quitted the room, leaving the youth in a state of mind which may be better imagined than described.

Walter Beveridge left the house in high dudgeon, offended by Skelton's harsh manner, and grieved to the heart at his unfeeling refusal to admit him as a suitor to his daughter. He mounted his little rough-coated pony, and urging it to its utmost speed, rode homeward to unbosom his grief to his aged mother. As he galloped down the road, the sighing of the wind among the trees, and the hasty flight of the rooks to the neighbouring forest, gave warning of the coming storm. Heavy drops began to

patter down as he reached his humble dwelling, and night drew on apace.

Walter gave an account to his mother of his interview with the rich yeoman, the conclusion of which we have attempted to describe; and after listening to sundry wise saws and apophthegms which old ladies generally keep "cut and dry" for such like occasions, sat himself down in the chimney corner, to watch the dying embers of the fire, and ruminate on his hard destiny.

Meanwhile the storm increased, and the rain descended in torrents; the wind howled, and shook, the humble dwelling, and the doors clattered on their hinges, as if beating time to the music of the blast without—it was a sad night for the traveller.

"Heyday!" cried the old dame, "'tis a fearful night—they say the devil rides upon the blast in such storms, and the witches go to sea in their sieves."

"Ay, marry, dear mother," said Walter, raising his head despondingly, "methinks the devil is abroad to-night; if he be looking for an usurer and a churl, he will find one eftsoones."

"Hush!" said the dame, in a whisper, "it's not for poor folk like us to say who is Satan's chosen. Father John says he will sometimes take strange fancies, and fondle the needy, whom he will lure with many—ha! Jesu, what's that?"

The old lady's sage reflections were suddenly cut short by the sound of footsteps near the door, at which, the next moment, there was a loud knocking.

Dame Beveridge was of opinion that it was not exactly safe to open the door; but her son thought differently, and though by no means an undutiful child, he was in no humour to listen to maternal remonstrance.

"Who knocks?" demanded Walter, rising quickly and stepping to the door.

"A poor travel-worn man," answered a voice from without.

"What are ye?" was the next question.

"A pedlar, good master."

"Whence come ye?"

"From the Town."

"Then why did ye not try the miller?"

"The stream is swelled by the rain, and has broken down the mill dam; he is wroth with the mishap, and would not take me in," replied the stranger.

"He is a churl," murmured Walter, opening the door. "Come in, friend, thou art poor, I ween, and men fly thee."

"Ay, marry, my worthy master," said the stranger, as he entered, "even as a leper—poverty is like a sore; it is troublesome to him that hath it, and unsightly to his friends."

"Excellent," said Walter; "thy wit, old sir, is as quick as thine hearing, for I wot not that my last words were spoken aloud."

The pedlar heeded not this remark. He entered; and setting down his pack, drew off his hood, from which he wrung the wet. He was an old man, with hair and beard of silver whiteness. His complexion was fair, and his eyes sparkled with a singular brightness for a man of his apparent age.

"I sought shelter for the night at the goodly house where the three roads meet," said the old man; "but they told me to be gone, and cursed me for my insolency, as they called it."

Walter started at the mention of the "goodly house," for it was Master Skelton's.

"Thy betters have no kindlier greeting there, father," said he; "but come, sit down, and we will see where we can bestow thee to-night."

Food and drink were offered to the old man, but he declined to partake of either, and begged that he might be shown to his resting place; a request which was complied with by Walter, notwithstanding the whispers of his mother, who protested that she did not like the pedlar's looks—an opinion which was certainly not weakened by Walter's dog, who kept sniffing at the stranger's heels, and occasionally uttering a low growl of dissatisfaction. These expressions of dislike did not escape the notice of the old man.

"Good mistress," said he, "ye have no need to fear; I am a poor weak old man; fifty years have I led a pedlar's life, but never coveted the goods of another. Behold this pack; it holds some things of value—all my worldly wealth; place it in your strong room until to-morrow."

Walter felt no inclination to receive this pledge

for the pedlar's honesty; but his mother determined to take the old man at his word, and locked up the pack in her store room. An hour afterwards the cottage was in darkness and silence, except the snoring of its inmates, and the shrill chirping of the crickets.

Young Walter slept, for he was weary; but his slumbers were disturbed by strange dreams. First he saw a train of well-dressed people escorting a newly married couple to their home. He looked, and lo! the bride was gruff Master Skelton's lovely daughter Emma, and the bridegroom, his hated rival, the crooked-backed reeve!

Again he dreamt; and this time he beheld a spacious hall filled with a gay company. Richly-clad couples were footing it merrily to the sound of the lute and rebeck: he awoke, and found his homely pillow wet with tears!

"The Blessed Virgin shield me," muttered the poor youth, and with a heavy sigh he again relapsed into sleep.

We must now leave the humble cottage of Walter Beveridge, and lead the reader to the substantial dwelling of Master Skelton. About an hour after the departure of his would-be son-in-law, a pedlar arrived and entreated shelter for the night. The wealthy yeoman was informed of his request; but he had no bowels for the poor.

"Bid him be gone," cried he, in a huff, "we cannot lodge such carrion as he."

"A murrain on thy master!" growled the pedlar, as a servant slammed the outer gate in his face. He proceeded on his way; and faint, weary, and drenched with rain, arrived at the dwelling of Walter Beveridge, where, as has been already shown, he met with a hospitable reception.

Master Skelton sat by his cheerful fire, listening to the howling of the storm without; on his table stood a tankard of warm ale, in which swam a roasted crab. While thus occupied, his ear caught the sound of horse's hoofs, and the next moment a loud voice from without cried—

"What ho! within there! a traveller would fain find shelter from the storm."

"Run, Will, and see who calls," said Master Skelton; "if he be of good condition, let him enter; but we keep no hostelry for hedge beggars." He had scarcely uttered this charitable sentiment, when a tall figure muffled in a large cloak, dripping with wet, entered the room.

Master Skelton was on his legs in a moment, and assisted the stranger to divest himself of his cloak. He then gave up his own chair to his guest, and ordered refreshment to be brought in. But the stranger ate nothing; he, however, intimated his wish to pass the night under the yeoman's roof; and after chatting familiarly for a short time with his entertainer, and paying a few words of compliment to the pretty Emma, he requested that he might be shown to his chamber.

"He is passing handsome!" sighed Emma, as the comely stranger quitted the room with her father. "He is not unlike my poor Walter, though somewhat taller, and with a prouder bearing. Ah, me! that face has doubtless made many hearts flutter."

It had indeed somewhat disturbed her own; but her love was plighted to Walter. Manly beauty is more puissant with women whose spring is almost merged in summer; and this your handsome coxcomb well knows.

Master Skelton conducted his guest to the best chamber; when the latter, unbuckling the belt with which he was girded, placed it in the yeoman's hands and besought him to put it in a place of safety.

"Give you good-night, sir," said the old man, as he closed the door, and hurried to his own chamber. Here the belt was subjected to a strict scrutiny; but it was fastened by cunningly contrived springs, and Skelton could only guess at its contents.

Emma of course dreamt of her lover that night, but her father's slumbers were broken and disturbed by very different visions. He thought of the well-filled belt which the stranger had committed to his charge, and the evil spirit whispered him, that he might become possessed of it by a bold effort.

He crept softly from his couch, took from a closet a large knife, and tried the point with his finger. The storm was hushed without, but

a halter! He gnashed his teeth with rage, tore his beard, and howled like a maniac, until his still slumbering household were roused from their beds and ran affrighted to his assistance.

* * * * *

Blithely sounded the notes of early birds. The sparrows' incessant chirping mingled with the sweet guttural trill of the swallow, and the "cock's shrill clarion" gave notice of the approach of morning. Walter Beveridge arose betimes, but early as was the hour, he found the pedlar up and dressed for his journey.

"Thanks, young master—thanks for your hospitality," said the old man. "I have many a weary mile to travel, and time presses. Now, mark me, for what I have to say concerns thee much. Five feet eastward from the foot of the ancient oak, near the ruined cross yonder, lies buried a great treasure." (Walter stared.) "It was hidden by an ancestor of thy lord the baron's, when civil war made merry England a desert. Go to the castle, and let him know that thou hast discovered it by my means. He hath a noble and a generous soul, and will reward thee richly for this service.—Peace, inquire no more."

"But," said Walter, imploringly, despite of this command, which was given in an imperative tone—"pr'ythee, good father, say, who shall I call thee?"

As he spoke, he mechanically turned his eyes in the direction of the ruined cross, and the old man, slapping him on the shoulder, replied—"PUCK THE PEDLAR!"

The astonished youth again turned to look upon his elfin guest, but lo, the room was empty, both pedlar and pack had vanished!

For the satisfaction of the unimaginative, we must add a few words by way of sequel. Walter discovered the treasure to the Baron, and was munificently rewarded. Master Skelton lost his wits, and died a few months afterwards; and

his daughter, no longer controlled by her avaricious father, blessed the happy Walter with her hand.

And of course there was a grand wedding. All who had known anything of either bride or bridegroom in their earlier life were invited.

Father Henry the priest of the parish was rigged out in new vestments for the occasion; the said vestments being the produce of a subscription raised by the good father's flock. But, though it is much to be regretted, the truth must be told; and the truth is that the holy man indulged so much in refreshment that his bishop heard of it; and for a time the village gossips were compelled to listen to the ministrations of another pastor.

Dame Beveridge lived to see her son a wealthy franklin, and often told to her grandchildren the story, how the mischievous Puck, in revenge for her unjust suspicions, had turned all her cream sour, emptied the rennet tub into a jar of new honey, and danced a measure in a bowl of furrmetry!

If you wish your neighbours to notice you, buy a dog and tie him up in the cellar all night. They won't sleep for thinking of you.



"'COME IN FRIEND,' SAID WALTER, 'THOUGH THOU ART POOR.'"

a hideous tempest raged in the old man's bosom. The moon-beams which entered at the small window glanced upon the long bright blade, and rendered the face of the treacherous host still more ghastly. He cautiously quitted his chamber and repaired to that of his guest, who was sleeping soundly. He knelt by the side of the sleeping man, and listened for a moment to his hard breathing, then clutched his weapon tightly, placing his thumb on the end of the haft, and preparing to strike.

"The saints say grace to thy unshriven soul!" he exclaimed, mentally, and raised his arm aloft, when lo! ere it descended, a violent buffet, dealt by an unseen hand, dashed him senseless to the floor!

It was long ere the perfidious host returned to consciousness, but when he had recovered his senses, the first rays of the morning sun had lit up the horn windows of the chamber, and the birds were chirping gaily on the house-top. He arose from the floor and looked wildly around him—the chamber was empty, and the bed had not been pressed! Was it a dream then? Had he no guest on the preceding evening? He hurried to his own room, pale and trembling, and examined his iron-bound chest. The belt, that fatal bait, was not there, but in its place lay

THE TYRANTS OF THE SCHOOL.

By the Author of "Sons of Foes."

CHAPTER XVIII.—continued.

Violently dragging both the children from the bed, the woman exclaimed passionately:

"I could kill you both, you little imps!"

"Oh mother, mother!" cried little Lena, "do not hurt poor Ida—do not hurt her, I pray, or you will hurt me most; it's all my fault, indeed it is, she only learnt her lessons to please me; she only slept with me when I was afraid to sleep alone, after you and papa have frightened me by quarrelling so."

"Go, wretch," thundered Mrs. Hood, as she savagely pushed Ida down the narrow stairs; "go to your kennel, you vixen, and to-morrow we will have a reckoning."

"You shan't ill-use poor Ida, that you shan't, you cruel, naughty mamma," screamed Lena, tearing herself away and following Ida down the stairs, at the foot of which she lay bruised and weeping.

The mother's rage was now worked up to a pitch of the wildest frenzy.

When she descended to the room below she found Lena closely encircling Ida in her pretty arms, as if to guard her from danger.

So terrified were they that they could scarcely stand for trembling.

"Lena let go your hold," said Mrs. Hood. "It will only be the worse for Ida if you do not."

"I'll do anything, mother," said the child, "if you'll only forgive her."

Saying which she stood a step aside.

"And now, wretch, fly to your kitchen," yelled Mrs. Hood.

"Go, go, Ida," cried the terrified child.

"I will not go," cried Ida, boldly; "you have told me that to-night which shows she has no power over me, and she shan't ill-use me any longer."

If a fiend had suddenly appeared at the door, it could not have astonished Marion more than did these words.

"What!" she screamed out, "you wretch, you dare to answer me?"

And she looked wildly round for some implement of torture, with which to chastise the undaunted Ida.

"Run Ida, run," cried Lena; "mother will kill you."

But Ida did not move, but seemed about to speak again.

This so maddened Mrs. Hood, that she seized the only thing within her reach—a pan of boiling water from the fire, and dashed it at her.

Oh what a shriek of agony came then.

But not from Ida.

The vessel had hit against the door, which screened her, and slanting off had fallen over Marion's own poor child.

"Oh God! what have I done?" exclaimed the distracted mother, as she fell senseless on the floor, beside her child.

Ida now lost all fears for herself, and tearing off the night-clothes from the scalded child, hurried away to the nearest doctor's.

When he came Mrs. Hood had recovered her senses, and was weeping over the sufferer.

When the doctor had gone, and all was still Ida started and trembled, for she heard the step of her who no longer disguised her hate, descending the stairs.

"Oh! you are here, are you?" hissed rather than said Mrs. Hood; "still up. What, this bed," and she pointed to a sort of drawer, "is not dainty enough for such as you?—but you shall have a worse one to-night."

So saying she took a key from her pocket, and opened the door of a dark and loathsome cellar.

On seeing this, Ida screamed out.

"Oh no, no, pray don't put me in there! The horrid rats—the rats will eat me!"

"I hope they may, you vixen," screeched her merciless persecutor; "but could they eat you twenty times over, you shall go in there to-night."

And she dragged the poor child to the mouth of the pit.

And thrusting her brutally in, closed and locked the door upon her.

Some hours after this, Eric Hood returned and found Marion weeping by her child's bed.

The first thing which had the power to bring her to herself, was Eric asking where Ida was. The moment she heard that name she burst into a flood of tears.

"You know Marion," he said, "how miserably poor we are, and all this poverty may be traced to one cause—your thirst for revenge. I know your wrong was a bitter one, but I think still more now than ever, that the way you took to right yourself was a mistake."

"What would you drive me to do now?" said Marion, "for I see there's something in your mind. Do not fear, speak out, I can bear anything you can say to-day; my passions are all dead within me, at least for a time, therefore speak plainly. You wish me to give back the child; is it not so?"

Eric Hood almost trembled for the effect his words might produce as he said:

"It is, but we will not give her up for nothing."

"What!" exclaimed his wife, kindling up, "what! sell my revenge? No, if I relinquish it, it is that I feel that heaven is working against my plans, and bringing them to nought. Eric, that child may now be dead."

"Dead!" gasped her husband; "what mean you?"

Marion then told him all that had happened the night before, and that in her anxiety for her own child she had never bestowed a thought upon the other.

Eric took the key from her trembling fingers, and snatching up a light hurried to the cellar.

He heard no sound; he opened the door and listened.

All was still as the grave.

The place had formerly been occupied by a wine merchant.

They called upon the child by name, but no answer fell upon their ears.

They advanced still further, but as yet could find no trace of her.

No corner of the dreary vaults did they leave unexplored, but their search was fruitless.

Ida could not be found.

"Marion," said Eric, turning sternly to his wife, "what mad foolery is this? What have you done with the girl? I am in no humour to be made your laughing-stock, so explain why you have played this trick upon me."

"It is no trick. I swear by the heavens above us," replied Marion, "I placed her here myself. The key of the lock has never been from my sight an instant."

Then suddenly she added, "See here," as she held up the flickering light towards the damp, shiny arches above their heads, and then descended two or three steps that led to a trap door.

"See, this is the only outlet from the vault, and this is fast secured by bolt and lock. Get another light, for this is going out, and let us once more examine every nook and cranny, and if we find her not, Satan himself must have spirited her away."

Another light was procured, and another close examination of the vault took place.

Every mouldering cask, every piece of rotting timber that lay about was removed, but all to no purpose.

Suddenly Eric Hood found upon one of the stone shelves a rag of a shawl, he knew to have been worn by Ida.

This in a degree removed from Eric's mind the suspicion that Marion had been trumping up this

absurd tale merely to deceive him, and hide the truth of her having disposed of the child in a way she dared not tell him.

A frightful idea at that moment crossed his mind, and he involuntarily held down the light as if examining the earth for a new made grave.

But no such sign was there.

To his wretched wife the mystery was almost awful, for she knew the truth of all she had asserted, but could find no clue to the mysterious disappearance of Ida.

Whether she were alive or dead they were utterly at a loss to conjecture.

And rack their brains as they would no dawning light broke in upon them, to lift, even for a moment, the dark and impenetrable cloud of mystery in which the fate of the poor, little waif was enshrouded.

CHAPTER XIX.

CYRIL AGAIN—A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE—THE FAIR SAMARITAN.

When Victor and Claude let go their hold of the rope to which Cyril Larchcomb was hanging over the tempest-tossed flood, the latter unfortunate youth was instantly precipitated into the violently rocking boat below.

The little vessel swayed perilously on one side from the violence of the shock, and the next instant Cyril was thrown out into the raging waters.

He succeeded, however, in grasping the gunwale of the boat, which soon righted itself, though it had shipped some brine.

The excessive strain upon the little craft caused it to break from its moorings.

And partially waterlogged though it was, it drifted rapidly with the hurrying tide, under a stiff easterly breeze.

Weak and faint as he was, Cyril hung on to the vessel's side with a death-like grip, determined not to relinquish it till sense and power left him.

On, on, sped the swaying, swirling boat on its wild and dangerous course, avoiding the rocks and jutting promontories, as though by a miracle.

How far he had gone, and in what direction, Cyril could not surmise.

He only knew that his limbs were fast becoming numbed and useless, and an icy, death-like sensation was fast seizing upon his heart, and robbing him of the power of sense and motion.

His stiffening fingers were relaxing their now feeble hold of the boat's side, and he found himself going—sinking!

He felt his hour had come, and his chilled, bloodless lips tried to frame words of prayer.

But his powers of reason were fast waning, merging into those mystic realms of oblivion.

He was only conscious of a violent, rebounding shock—a loud crashing, rending sound—and he became insensible!

When consciousness returned, Cyril Larchcomb found himself lying at the mouth of a cavernous and beautiful gorge between the steep cliffs, known as Blackthorp Dern.

The warm, early sun was streaming gratefully down upon him and upon the yellow sparkling sands and dancing blue waves down the beach.

He essayed to rise, but his weakened, stiffened limbs refused their office, and he sank back again with a groan of anguish.

"If I could only reach the shelter of yonder ravine," he murmured, fixing his eyes upon the cool dark gully, "I might there conceal myself from observation, for the country seems full of enemies."

And he endeavoured, though not without great labour, to drag himself along the yielding sand.

He had scarcely reached the entrance of the gorge when he sank down utterly exhausted.

"Yet why should I so eagerly seek to pro-

long my wretched existence?" he mused. "It is only avoiding one death for another—escaping the swift, sharp stroke of the assassin's blade for the more lingering horrors of consuming thirst and hunger."

"And yet I must hope that the kind, merciful Providence, which has shielded me through so many dangers," he added, "will safely guide me to that haven of rest and peace for which I so hunger—to Angela. Ah, yes! for her sweet sake I will make the effort."

And again he toiled slowly on amongst the tall, rank grass, till he reached a thicket overhung with matted vines and briars.

Here he stumbled and rolled to the bottom of the deep hollow, where he lay stunned and groaning.

About this time Aline Cleveland, the beautiful daughter of Sir Talbot, left the Deserted Grange, accompanied by her favourite dog.

And the happy, artless girl rambled among the enchanting scenery of the fresh and early morn, dreaming a delicious day dream in which the handsome person of Victor St. Clare took a prominent part.

"How handsome and brave, how good and kind he was," said the fair girl, thinking aloud. "I wonder whether we shall ever meet again?"

And the query ended in a gentle sigh as she came to a stop in the sequestered spot.

She found she had unconsciously wandered to the foot of Blackthorp Dorn, just where the deep, dark gully runs up its beautifully wooded sides.

Aline thinking she had walked somewhat too far, turned to retrace her steps.

Suddenly the dog sprang from her side into the Dorn, and set up the most furious barking.

She stopped, and called him back; he did not seem to hear her, but barked more fiercely than before.

At that moment she thought she detected the sound of a smothered groan.

It seemed to proceed from the heart of the deep and silent gully.

Aline's first impulse was to turn and fly.

But though gentle and dove-like, she was a courageous and noble-minded girl.

And resisting the feeling of momentary terror she stood still an instant to collect her thoughts.

Then boldly advancing into the dark narrow glen, she called back the dog once more.

He came crouching to her feet, wagging his tail, and looking behind him towards a hollow in the steep side of the gully.

And there, lying on the dank grass, beneath the hanging foliage of the bank, Aline espied the form of a young and graceful man.

His once elegant dress was all torn and hacked, and stained in some places with blood.

It was no other than the youthful Cyril Larchcomb, as our readers must have already surmised.

She knelt down beside the faint and wounded youth, and in her soft piteous accents said:

"Tell me, young sir, how I may alleviate your suffering, and if it be in my power I will most willingly do so."

The words fell like a flood of sweetest melody upon Cyril's weary, suffering ears.

He looked eagerly up, and seeing the young fairy-like vision beside him, thought her an angel fresh winged from heaven.

He gazed intently upon her for some moments, then, as though a sudden suspicion had crossed his mind, he said—

"Tell me your name, child?"

"Aline Cleveland!" she answered, in her sweet, guileless tones, "the only child of Sir Talbot Cleveland, of Cleveland Grange."

"My enemy!" gasped Cyril under his breath, turning a shade paler.

"Perhaps you will now favour me with your name, young sir?" said the fair girl, tenderly, not noticing his emotion.

"You will promise me first never to reveal it

to anyone?" said Cyril, uneasily, "or I dare never mention it, more especially to the daughter of Sir Talbot Cleveland."

"Have you then brought dishonour upon it?" asked Aline, innocently.

"No; by my soul!" exclaimed Cyril, with earnest fervour. "I am indeed more sinned against than sinning. But were my name but borne on the treacherous breeze to the ears of the wolves in human form who thirst for my blood, nothing could save me from their murderous fury."

"I sincerely pity you with all my heart," said Aline, with ineffable compassion depicted on her lovely features.

Cyril with a weary smile, pressed her little hand, and said:

"I will trust you, I am Cyril Larchcomb, son of General Norman Larchcomb."

"My father's bitterest foe!" muttered the panting girl in a trembling whisper.

"You see I had good reason for withholding my name, but still I trust you will not refuse me your precious aid," he said, pleadingly.

He looked so handsome and interesting, though dreadfully pale and ill, that her gentle heart was sorely touched.

"You are faint and ill, I will get you food and wine. Fear not, your secret is safe with me," and she flitted away like a sunbeam.

She soon returned, bearing a basket containing nourishing food and a bottle of rare old port.

Gratefully acknowledging her kindness, the half famished youth eagerly partook of the good things spread before him.

Shortly after, with the assistance of Aline, the wounded youth was able to raise himself from the damp ground.

And having made sure, as she thought, that there was no one within sight or hearing, the noble-minded Aline, not without difficulty, helped to support his tottering steps down the glen.

She led him to a dry and sheltered hollow deep down among the trees, where no one was likely to follow.

For more than four days did the young and delicate heiress steal out of the Grange in the cold and darkness, and grope her way through the wild and lonely glen to carry food and comfort to the poor wounded youth.

She dared not take a light for fear of exciting suspicion, and as the night winds whistled through the whispering trees, a thrill of undefinable fear shot through her whole being.

The food and warm wraps which she contrived to convey to his hiding place, she was forced to take by stealth.

And the agonising apprehensions of discovery, which constantly haunted her youthful mind, rendered her unhappy by day and disturbed her sleep at night.

"Thanks to your unceasing care and kindness, Miss Aline, I think I shall be able to leave my hiding place by to-morrow dawn," said Cyril on the evening of the fourth day, "though I trust the time is not far distant when we may meet again under happier circumstances."

"I hope we may, Mr. Larchcomb," said Aline, sighing, "when these distressing political contentions which cause brother to raise his hand against brother, friend against friend, and father against son, are at an end."

"Alas! yes. And Heaven grant it may be soon. Have you brought me the weapon with which to defend myself in case of need," he added.

"It is here," she replied, taking a pistol from under her cloak, and handing it to him, together with the necessary ammunition.

"Use it if you must in defending your life," she continued sadly, "but promise me that, whatever betides, you will never point it against my father."

"I promise—nay, I swear I will not," said Cyril, fervently.

"And now, good bye!" She gave him her hand.

He raised it to his lips, and a moment more she was lost to sight midst the deep woodland mists.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOCTOR'S COMMUNICATION—THE SPY—TREACHERY AFOOT—THE MYSTERIOUS SHOTS.

On the afternoon of the day preceding the eve of Cyril's parting with Aline, one of the ushers of Spireville College, informed Victor that Dr. Syntax desired his presence in the study.

Wondering what the eccentric old pedagogue could want with him, Victor left the class and hastily strode along the corridor that led to the doctor's room.

As he approached the half opened door he perceived Titus Grumples softly emerging.

A significant expression lighted up his shifty green eyes as he saw our hero enter.

And instead of continuing his way in the direction of the school-room he returned with cat-like tread to the partly opened door and peered cautiously in.

"I have here a letter," said the little doctor, holding it up as he spoke; "from the Rev. Owen Denvill, requesting my permission for your attendance at his residence this evening, it being his daughter's birthday."

"I purposed asking for leave of absence sir, on the termination of the lessons, in order to accept Miss Denvill's invitation," said Victor.

"No more than I expected, nor less than I shall grant," returned the doctor. "But that is not the main point. I have also another letter from General Larchcomb, in which he seconds Mr. Denvill's wish for your presence at Hayscroft Vicarage."

Victor regarded the little divine in questioning surprise.

"It appears," continued the doctor, "that Mr. Denvill is an old friend and schoolfellow of his, and he is desirous of spending the evening with him, it being his last night in these parts, and being so he appears to be very anxious to see you before leaving."

"I am all impatience to be off sir," said Victor, eagerly.

"One moment St. Clare, did I understand you rightly, when you gave me a reason for being late the other evening, that it was owing to having assisted his son to escape from the power of those masked people?"

"Quite right, sir," replied Victor, and he thereupon gave a brief account of the whole affair.

The worthy pedagogue was deeply interested with the recital, and on its conclusion began to load Victor with questions.

But our hero begged to be allowed to be gone as the time was flying, but he would be pleased to tell him all particulars in the morning.

And the worthy pedagogue reluctantly let him go.

There was a scampering sound of hurrying footsteps as our hero approached the door.

And, as he dashed through the pine-wood beyond the school on his road to Hayscroft, he came suddenly upon a couple of forms closely engaged in conversation.

On becoming aware of his presence, however, they hastily beat a retreat behind the broad trunk of a tree.

But not before our hero had recognised them as Ranzo the gipsy, and Titus Grumples.

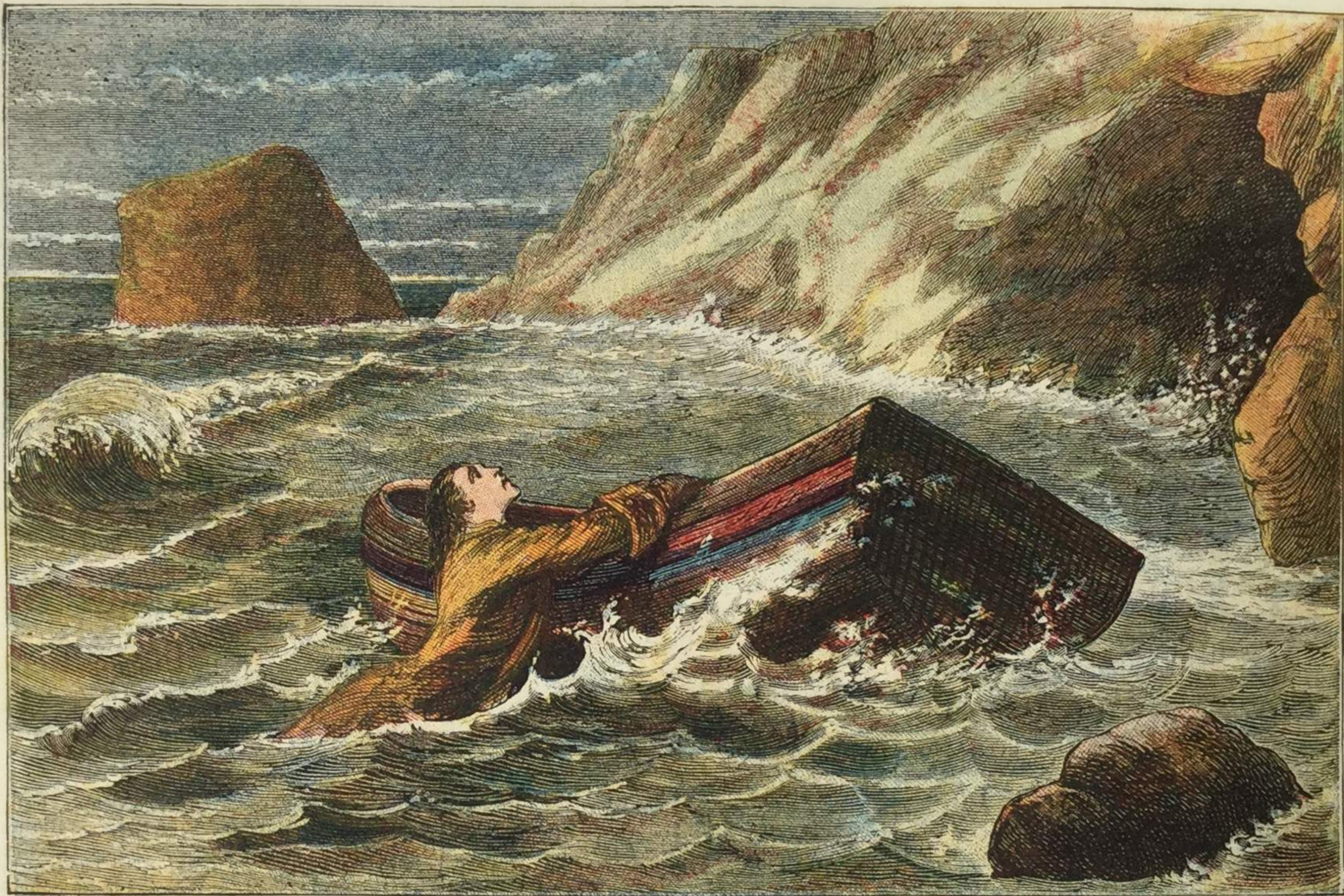
"They are plotting mischief, I'll be sworn," muttered Victor as he hurried on.

It was nearly dark when our hero reached Hayscroft Vicarage.

He received a hearty welcome from the worthy vicar and his amiable wife, which at once put him at his ease.

His reception by the lovely blushing girl, whose natal day it was, was equally sincere and cordial.

And General Larchcomb too wrung his hand in a manner which betokened feelings of no ordinary nature.



"CYRIL CLUNG TO THE VESSEL WITH A DEATH-LIKE GRIP."

But in order not to dim the brightness of that happy, smiling scene, he assumed a gaiety he was far from feeling.

Claude Chester, Harry Broadly, and Arthur Fanshaw, were amongst the guests, and it was a sight to see the way in which they contended for a shake of our hero's hand.

Daisy charmed every ear by her exquisite playing; whilst Victor, whom she accompanied, enthralled his hearers by his rich young voice.

Seating himself at length by Daisy's side, he playfully opened a sketch book that lay on the cushioned seat, and glancing over it, said with kindling admiration.

"Why, this is Blacknest Priory! Surely this must be the picture Claude has more than once mentioned to me."

Claude suddenly went red to the roots of his curly chesnut hair.

"Allow me, Miss Denvill," added Victor, not noticing his friend's confusion, "to compliment you upon having executed a most picturesque and faithful likeness of the charming old ruin."

"Your eulogy is scarcely deserved, Master St. Clare," returned the blushing girl, "seeing that the picture is incomplete."

"Incomplete!" repeated our hero, re-examining it; "Oh, yes!" he added suddenly, whilst slyly regarding Claude's excessive embarrassment, "I remember now, it wants the owl!"

It was now growing late, and all had left save our hero, Claude, and General Larchcomb, who lingered yet awhile with the vicar.

The two men had been conversing together for some time in subdued whispers.

When suddenly the vicar said in plainly, audible tones:

"And you have utterly failed to gain tidings of your son?"

"Utterly, old friend!" said the general with a sigh. "I have had the shallows dragged for

miles, the beach watched at every turn, in hope he might be thrown up by the tide and have scoured the country far and wide, but all in vain—no token of him can be found and I return home with a void in my heart which nothing can ever fill."

His voice became husky with emotion, and his fine eyes dim with unshed tears.

There was a solemn pause.

Then Daisy, whose starry eyes had been regarding him intently, suddenly brightened with intelligence, and she said soothingly:

"Pardon me, General Larchcomb, for thus rudely breaking in upon your reflections, but what was the name of your son?"

"Cyril Larchcomb!" returned the gallant soldier looking at the gentle questioner in surprise.

"Then 'tis he!" exclaimed Daisy with infectious animation. "General, your son lives!"

"Lives!" cried the veteran, incredulously.

"Yes, lives! I saw him whilst I was making a sketch of Blackthorp Dern. He—"

Her words were drowned by the deafening reports of fire-arms, as they poured their deadly fire through the diamond windows of the cosy room.

All started to their feet in terror and alarm.

And loud above the murderous shots, and the crash of broken glass, was heard the appalling cry of the females, as they saw the general stagger, and fall bleeding to the ground.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VAULTS BENEATH THE OLD SHOWMAN'S HOUSE—IDA'S TERROR—A STRANGE ADVENTURE—ESCAPE.

When Ida had from sheer exhaustion ceased screaming, the horrors of her situation became doubly frightful,

The dense, utter darkness made her eyes ache with over-straining, in their fruitless endeavour to penetrate the soul-chilling gloom.

And the awful stillness, became almost unbearable.

Who shall adequately paint the terrible sufferings of the poor, hapless child?

All the terrors of a dream haunted her imagination. Horrible thought! perhaps she was doomed to be starved to death.

But even this, after a time, appeared less frightful than the dread she had of being attacked by the horrid rats, with which the dismal place swarmed.

Where—where could she fly to be out of their dreaded reach?

Suddenly remembering the stone shelves that were built in the recesses, she groped her way round by the dank and slimy walls to find them.

With eager frightened haste she scrambled into one, and crouching in a corner, she tremblingly awaited her fate.

Ida had not been in this situation long, before she heard the pattering of little feet, and the low, sharp squeaking sounds, that told her too plainly her dreaded enemies were approaching.

At this juncture her feelings were worked up to the most harrowing pitch.

She heard a sudden dash of something, she knew not what. Then succeeded a most violent and appalling squeaking and screeching of her enemies.

A terrible battle of life and death was being fought.

But a few minutes sufficed, and all was again still in that dark, damp, festering, and horrible vault.

(To be continued. Commenced in No. 21.)

CANADIAN JACK;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD LOG HUT.

A COLONIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

JACK and Will had thanked Hinton and Sheriff Poley in appropriate terms for their timely rescue.

"Now," said Hinton, "we will go back and attend to business. What is your programme?"

"We shall stay in the woods for a few days," replied Jack, "just to try and find out something."

"That is right."

"The girl is in hiding somewhere about here,"

ment and Labrador's disappearance would be finally cleared up.

How this would be done they were at a loss to tell. Time alone would show.

The Indian camp was not a savoury or pleasant place to linger at.

They were not at all sorry to get away from it.

"I think," said Jack, when they had gone a little way, "our first move should be to kill something to eat, for I am faint for want of food."

"So am I," answered Will. "What can we get?"

"If we tend towards the river, we are sure to come across musk ox; it is very good eating, quite as good as the bull beef you buy in the butchers' shops. There is other game, too, up here you have not seen yet."

"What is that?"

"Bravo!" said Will.

"That is the most dangerous creature we have in these wilds," remarked Jack. "The hunters call it go-for-dog, but its natural history name is wolverine. The Indians term it the skunk-bear. I have known it kill a man."

"It looks awfully fierce."

"So it is, and has vast muscular strength. If you ever meet one alone give it a wide berth. We can't eat it, so we will go on after a musk ox."

"You bet I will," answered Will.

They waited a few minutes to see the wolverine die, which it soon did, and then they pushed forward.

Jack examined the ground carefully for signs of musk ox, and at last was fortunate enough to strike a trail.

He saw the marks of its cloven hoofs in the soil, and also noticed that it had been



"WHO ARE YOU?" DEMANDED JACK.

added Jack, "and I know it. Sir Reginald and that scoundrel Paule have gone to visit her. We may happen on their track."

"I wish you luck," replied Hinton; "if I could render you any more assistance I would gladly do so."

"Don't mention it. I have no right to expect it. You came just in the nick of time. The rest we must accomplish by ourselves."

The lumbermen shouldered their rifles, and, giving Jack a cheer, went off at a quick pace towards their camp in the woods where they were working.

Hard, indomitable labourers were they, not one of them liking to lose a day.

Both Jack and Will were thinking of the old log hut. It was in that direction they were going to bend their footsteps; their minds always reverted to the hut.

It was there, or in that neighbourhood, that they felt sure the mystery of Fanny's conceal-

"Ermine, grey fox, and musquash, but I prefer the musk ox, as the other little animals I have mentioned taste rank."

While talking they had wandered into the forest.

Suddenly they saw a creature glaring savagely at them with glistening eyes. It was about twice the size of a large cat, and had long claws and tail, with vicious-looking, white gleaming teeth.

It lashed its tail and spit like an angry cat. "Look out!" cried Jack. "Get behind a tree, quick! I'll shoot."

"Is it dangerous?"

Jack made no answer. He raised his rifle. The animal made a spring, but he fired and stopped its career in a very clever manner.

It required nerve and skill to do so, however. As it rolled over and over in its dying agonies, it bit and scratched up the ground in a paroxysm of fury.

eating the tender shoots and leaves from the trees.

They came up to it as it was lying down in its lair. It rose at the sight of the strangers and attempted to run.

A shot from Canadian Jack quickly brought it on its knees, and a second from Will killed it.

In a moment Jack was bending over it. He partially skinned it, and cut off what meat he wanted, while Will kindled a fire.

They made an excellent breakfast of broiled beef, and went to the river for water, after which they proceeded leisurely to the old log hut.

By this time the day was getting spent, it being nearly four o'clock.

It happened by the merest accident that they came to the spot where, a short time before, they had met the old man of the woods.

They knew the tree again in a moment. No trace of Bowers was to be discovered, however.

"Here's where we saw the wild man first," observed Jack. "I wonder if he is in his nest, if so, we might get something out of him."

"Shall I shin up the tree and see?" asked Will.

"If you don't mind."

Will did so, and, reaching the little house Bowers had built for himself, found it empty.

There were no signs of it having been recently occupied.

He descended and told Jack of his want of success in finding the wild man.

While they were talking, they heard a sound of footsteps coming over the grass, which was springing up between the trees.

Looking up, they saw a grim, gaunt, ghastly, spectral figure limping towards them.

It was Bowers.

He appeared to be so weak that he had a difficulty in dragging one foot after the other.

It took him a minute or more to go a yard.

His long grey hair was dabbled with blood, which trickled slowly from a terrible gash in his head.

Evidently he had received a serious injury.

He seemed to be at the point of death, but he had crawled to his home, such as it was, to die.

Staggering like a drunken man, he reeled, tottered, and pitching forward, fell full length at Canadian Jack's feet.

"Poor fellow," said Jack; "somebody has hurt him."

The wild man groaned as if in pain.

"He is dying," replied Will; "look at him, he has death in his face. Who has committed this horrible outrage? Question him."

"I fully intend to do so," answered Jack.

"Make haste then, while life lasts; it is ebbing fast away."

"It's real mean, that's what I call it."

Saying this, Canadian Jack sat down on the ground, and raised the head of the old man on his knee.

The latter looked up with lack-lustre eyes; breathing with great difficulty.

"How did this happen, my friend?" asked Jack, in kind, encouraging accents.

Bowers made no answer.

"Give him a drop of whisky out of your flask," suggested Will; "it will be a little oil to feed the expiring lamp."

Jack took out his flask and poured a small quantity of the old rye down Bowers' throat.

He gasped, and a tremor ran through his frame.

"Who did this injury you are suffering from?" Jack enquired. "Don't be afraid to speak. You are among friends."

"I don't know you," replied the wild man, faintly. "You didn't use to live at Pine Forks."

"But I am acquainted with you," Jack hastened to say. "Your name is Bowers."

"Ha! You do know me."

"Years ago you lived at the old log hut, and the bears killed your wife and children."

The old man shuddered.

"Good heavens! What do you want to tell me about that for?" he screeched. "You are a bear. The place swarms with them. Bears—all bears."

In an instant Jack saw he had touched the wrong note.

"What did you do when you went into your old hut?" he asked.

The wild man smiled.

"I went down—down," he answered.

His voice was growing weaker every moment. His eyes were glazing and becoming fixed.

"Did what?" asked Jack.

"He hit me on the head and I knew no more. All night I was so still, but I woke up, and I have got home at last."

"Who hit you?"

"One of the bears. Don't you do it. I shall die fast enough."

"Where did you go?"

"Down, I tell you. Don't speak any more. The clouds are opening. I see my poor dear wife—my children, beckoning to me. They are calling. I come! I come!"

Jack could scarcely conceal his vexation.

There was much to be got out of the old man, but he could not speak coherently.

Jack gave him some more whisky.

"Where did you go down?" he queried.

"At the old, old spot," was the answer.

"What do you mean?"

"I—I found it out. It is mine," stammered Bowers. "If they had only stopped there the bears would not have eaten my poor dear wife and her babes."

"Explain it to me."

"No, no; you are a bear."

Jack was in despair.

The old man of the woods was no better than a drivelling idiot; he had something to tell, but he took very good care not to tell it.

"I did not know that anyone was there," continued Bowers, "but the man seized me, took me outside, and killed me."

"Who did?"

"A tall thin man. Oh! don't talk to me any more. The bears are everywhere. I can see them all round me."

He gazed wildly around him.

"Where are the bears which injured you?" enquired Jack, humouring his fancy.

"Up there," was the reply; "up at my clearing, where I used to live."

"The old log hut?"

"Yes; go there—go—and—"

A fit of coughing seized him, and he could say no more.

"Will, my dear boy," said Jack, "I cannot leave the old man until he dies; it would not be consistent with Christian charity, and he may say something more. People's ideas get clearer before they die, just for the moment. Everything that falls from his lips is of the greatest interest to us."

"No doubt of that."

"Well, I reckon I will stay by him until he dies; meanwhile, you can go on to the hut and watch."

"With pleasure."

"Come back when the moon is up."

"Before that," replied Will.

"I have an idea of camping in the old man's nest to-night," continued Jack. "It is well lined."

"Comfortably; and he has put a roof over it to keep the dew off."

"Well," exclaimed Jack, "cut along and see what you can find out. I'll watch the old man, and perhaps kill something for supper."

"If not, we must go without, and wait for morning," put in Will.

"Don't be long gone. Hang round the hut and keep your weather eye open."

"Right. I know my way," replied Will. "When I have once been to a place I always remember the path."

"You have the bump of topography."

"I hope I shall never have a worse one."

Laughingly Will Corry started on his journey to the old log hut, and Jack turned his attention to the sick man.

He was very bad indeed.

The sun was sinking towards the western horizon in a flood of golden splendour. Bowers shut his eyes as if the light was too strong for them, but his lips moved.

Jack bent over and put his ear close to his mouth.

"I'm coming," he murmured. "No more trouble where I am going; no more suffering from cold and hunger."

"Do you forgive the man who struck you?" enquired Jack.

"Yes; it is all for the best. But the girl I saw looked so sad, and begged him to spare me."

"Where was she?"

"In there; if my family had stayed there, as I told them, the bears would not have got them. Oh! there they are again. Bears, bears everywhere."

He beat the empty air frantically with his hands, as if trying to keep off some enemies who were striving to do him an injury.

Low moans came from his lips, and his features were strangely contorted.

Gradually he grew weaker, his breath came in quick, short gasps, and there was scarcely any pulsation.

Jack was very much vexed at not being able to get more out of him.

He had doubtless been somewhere and seen Fanny, who, when Paule pounced on him, had interceded on his behalf.

That this place was near the old log hut, he also had no doubt.

Beyond this there was no thoroughfare; he could not go any further; the road was blocked.

He was roused from a reverie into which he had fallen, by a horrid rattling in the old man's throat.

It was the death rattle, announcing mercifully his release from a world which had been full of woe for him.

Bowing his head reverently, Jack said a prayer for the repose of his soul.

Then he dragged the body into a shady spot under some flowering shrubs.

Scarcely had he accomplished this task, than Will Corry came back running.

"Anything up?" queried Jack, clutching his gun.

"I have seen Paule, and thought it best to cut back and let you know," was the reply.

"Where is he?"

"About a hundred yards from the old log hut, leaning against a hickory tree, as if expecting somebody."

"You should have stayed and watched."

"Is the wild man dead? If so, come back with me," said Will.

"I have no objection."

They were about to start off when footsteps were heard approaching, the branches of the tree were pushed on one side, and a man appeared.

He was a little undersized person of middle age, dressed in seedy black cloth clothes, with a soft felt hat of a similar colour; his waistcoat buttoned high, but revealed a white tie, such as parsons wear.

In fact, his appearance was decidedly clerical.

"Hi! good people," he shouted. "Stop, I pray thee, for am I not lost in the wood, even as Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress' was?"

"Lost?" repeated Jack.

"Yea, verily."

"Who are you?"

"The Reverend Peter Stiggins, a Nonconformist minister, appertaining to the hard shell methodist persuasion, at present exhorting at Pine Forks, to which ungodly spot I was favoured with a call five years ago from Lake-in-the-Woods."

He spoke with a strong nasal twang, which was far from pleasing.

"What brought you into the woods?" asked Jack.

"I have come to tie the matrimonial knot between a brother and a sister in the faith," was the answer.

"To marry a couple?"

"Yea, verily."

"Where are they?"

"Of a truth I know not; it is for you to direct me," exclaimed the Reverend Stiggins.

"How can I do so, when I do not possess any knowledge of your destination?"

"You are a hunter and a trapper I presume, consequently you are at home here, and may be able to direct me to the old log hut."

Jack started visibly.

"Ha! you know it. This is glad tidings of great joy," continued the minister.

"I do; if it is the house that used to shelter one Bowers, whose family were devoured by wild beasts."

"The same. I have heard the tragic story."

"Is it there you want to go?"

"Of a verity. There am I to meet a man who is to conduct me to the brother and sister who would be made twain."

"Paule?" ejaculated Canadian Jack.

"That is his name. Do you associate with him?" enquired the parson, in surprise.

"Oh, yes; I know him well," answered Jack, carelessly. "We used to be partners. He told me you were coming."

He saw that it was necessary to dissemble a little.

He had occasion for all his ready wit just then.

"Then you know De Fonville?" said the Reverend Peter. "He is my cousin, and it is he who has sent me up here to perform the marriage ceremony."

The minister was imprudently letting out all his secrets.

Jack nodded his head.

"Sir Reginald Dollman is the bridegroom," he replied, "and Miss Fanny Corry is the bride."

"Precisely. Yea, verily, thou art correct; for these are the names that have been given me," said Stiggins.

"The lady is not altogether willing, I understand, to unite herself in wedlock to the gentleman."

"That is nothing. I shall ignore that fact, and by virtue of my priestly office make them man and wife. That is all Sir Reginald requires."

"Are you well paid for it?"

"Yea, verily. I have received the sum of fifty pounds. But is not the labourer worthy of his hire, my friend?"

"Certainly."

"I cannot preach the gospel for nothing and live. But prithee tell me my way to this old log hut," exclaimed the Reverend Peter. "I would fain get this marriage done early to-morrow morning, so that I may return to my flock."

"Where are the bride and bridegroom awaiting you?" enquired Jack.

"Nay, I cannot tell: that will be revealed to me by the man Paule."

Jack had great difficulty in suppressing an exclamation of impatience.

He felt sure that the parson knew where Fanny was shut up.

But he was mistaken in his conjecture.

Paule knew well how to keep his secret.

"What are the happy pair going to do when they are married?" continued Jack, hoping to elicit some information.

"My relative, De Fonville, has already engaged a coach to take them away from Pine Forks," was the rejoinder; "it is to meet them out of the town to-morrow."

"Why all this secrecy?"

"It is rendered essential by the vigilance of a rival lover; one for whom the lady is said to evince a preference."

"A rival, eh?"

"Yea, verily; one of the ungodly: a consorter with Indians, a tramp, a frequenter of taverns, one who looketh on the wine when it is red, a manipulator of the cards, and a thrower of dice."

"Who is this?"

"A worldly-wise creature whom they call Canadian Jack."

The latter was quite prepared to hear his name mentioned, but he burned to resent the opprobrious epithets with which it was coupled.

"Who gave you this character of Canadian Jack?" he demanded.

"It is De Fonville's description. Truly he has no love for the fellow," was the reply. "I hope I shall never meet with him."

"Do you know that it is a bad thing to believe all you hear to a man's prejudice?"

"I would not say a word of scandal against anyone, nor say an untruth. My zeal for Christian charity is too great," exclaimed the Reverend Peter.

He indulged in a pious snivel.

"Come," he added, "I must be getting on my way. You have kindly promised to guide me."

"I must have a reward. What are you going to give me?" replied Jack.

"I will give you my blessing. Yea, verily."

"Are you in the habit of generously giving away what you don't want?"

"Well, humph! it is hard to part with the hard-earned coin; still you shall have a shilling. My friend, what is your name?"

"I am Canadian Jack," cried our hero.

He drew himself up proudly.

The Reverend Peter looked as if he was desirous of creeping into his boots.

"Oh, lord!" he whined. "I've made a mess of it this time."

Jack tore down a stout branch from the tree near him.

"Now, mister reverend scandalmonger," he said, "just be good enough to take back all you have uttered against me."

"Certainly, with alacrity. Of a verity I am like a frail bark that has been sucked into the vortex."

"Make haste, or—"

"Immediately. Oh, dear! to think that I should have taken no heed. The scales were upon my eyes."

"Now then, begin! Hurry up!" said Jack, raising the stick.

"Yes, yes, I apologise, and of a verity take it all back. You are the most perfect gentleman that ever—what shall I say? Oh! what an idiot I have been. I might have guessed who you were; most assuredly so."

Jack could not resist giving him a couple of sounding blows over the shoulders.

This caused the parson to utter two fearful yells.

"See here, mister minister," exclaimed Jack, "you know who I am, and that of course I shall do all I can to stop this infamous marriage."

"Yes. Alas! that I should have undertaken the job. Shall I turn back, even now?"

"No; you will please to go on. My friend here is the lady's brother. We two will conduct you to the old log hut. Paule must not see us, nor must you say a word of this occurrence to him. Swear!"

"I swear it willingly," replied the parson.

"If you break your word, I shall find means of punishing you before you can regain your home in Pine Forks."

He tapped the butt of his pistol significantly.

The reverend gentleman sank on his knees in an agony of fear.

He could not bear the sight of firearms.

"Spare my life! Oh! spare that, and I will do anything you require of me," he cried.

"Good. Get up, and walk along by the side of us," said Jack.

Will saw that Jack had devised some scheme, by means of which he hoped to get at Fanny.

What this was, however, he could not exactly make out.

"Will you tell me what you are going to do?" he asked. "It is rather dangerous to go too near Paule."

"I don't think so," was the rejoinder. "If this whining hypocrite keeps his oath, we shall be all right."

"Will he? Can you trust him?"

"Not further than I can see the worm. Paule will take him to Fanny's hiding-place; we shall follow and track them to the lair."

"I hope so," said Will. "Poor dear Fanny, how she must suffer. But, say, if this Stiggins should give us away to Paule, the latter would stop short and keep from the hiding-place. What would you do then?"

"Have it out with Paule, and see which is best man," replied Jack.

"Fight him?"

"To the death. If I killed him, I don't think the coroner would trouble to hold an inquest, and if he did, I know that no jury in Pine Forks would bring in any verdict but 'serve him right.'"

"Beware! he is a strong man, agile, muscular."

"Pshaw! If he is one of the toughs, so am I," laughed Jack. "I was never afraid of a man, and I'm sure I'm not going to begin now."

"I only made the remark," said Will, "because Paule is a desperate man. He has reason to hate you, because you made him an outlaw. No, no, Jack, you must not be too reckless for our sakes."

"Thank you; it is nice to know that somebody cares for one."

The Reverend Peter Stiggins listened to all that passed between the two friends, but he did not venture to interrupt.

When they had finished he folded his hands and looked up at the sky.

He had a trick of rolling his eyes in an ecstatic way until only the whites were visible.

"How blessed is it to see two hands meet in friendship's clasp," he exclaimed. "I am glad I have made your acquaintance, because when in your company I feel I become a better man."

"Do you make any charge for that?" asked Jack.

"The smallest contributions thankfully received. I mean—excuse me, I fancied I was in the pulpit."

"Take that then," Jack cried, striking him with the hickory. "You need not pump out any more of your cant on me. You're not glad to know me. You don't feel better for being with me, so it's no use saying it."

"Oh! that stroke was painful, but I will not complain," sighed the Reverend Peter.

"Do you want another one?"

"Heaven forbid."

"Then hold your tongue; we are nearing the old log hut."

A peculiar smile curled the lips of the minister, and his eyes rolled more ecstatically than ever.

"Halt!" cried Canadian Jack, after going a few steps further.

By looking through the trees, they could distinguish the old log hut, and Paule standing like a sentinel a short distance from it.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUEL IN THE WOOD—JACK IS BADLY BAFLED.

Suddenly Paule turned round and beheld Canadian Jack, Will, and the Reverend Peter Stiggins.

His first impulse was to run to the log hut. He took a few steps in that direction.

"Halt!" shouted Jack, "or I fire."

This brought the half-breed to a standstill. Jack at once advanced boldly, being followed at a short distance by Will and the minister.

When Jack and Paule were face to face, their looks showed that there could be no compromise between them.

Determined hostility was prominent in both, neither being able to conceal the deadly hatred that existed.

Jack was suffering from a sense of injury and persecution, which was all the more bitter on account of Fanny.

"Now, my man," exclaimed Jack, "we are alone, and we will settle our accounts."

"I am willing," replied Paule, whose voice was hoarse with rage. "But as to being alone, you have your friend with you; that means two to one."

"He will see fair play."

"Let him put his rifle on the ground."

"I see no objection to that, as I do not wish to take any mean advantage of you," answered Jack.

Will deposited his rifle upon the grass and folded his arms.

"What do you propose?" asked Paule.

"First of all there is time for a parley," replied Jack. "This person, the Reverend Peter Stiggins, as he calls himself, has told me, without knowing who I was, that De Fonville had sent him to the old log hut to meet you, in order to perform the marriage ceremony between Sir Reginald Dollman and Miss Fanny Corry."

"Why not?" enquired Paule, insolently.

"Because she is engaged to me, and does not wish it."

"How do you know? For some time you have not seen her. Sir Reginald is rich. Her opinions have undergone a great change."

"Will you turn the game up, and deliver the lady to me at once?"

"No."

The reply was short, sharp, emphatic, and decisive.

Paule had made up his mind not to give way a single inch.

He evidently did not care what the consequences might be.

"You have refused the olive branch that I held out to you, and declined to act rightly," Jack exclaimed; "therefore there is nothing for it but for you and I to fight."

"Do you propose a duel?"

"Yes."

"What if I refuse?" enquired Paule.

"I have you covered now," replied Jack, who held a pistol in his hand, pointed at his enemy, "and if you will not fight, I will drop you in your tracks."

"Have I my choice of weapons?"

"Decidedly. You are the party challenged. Which will you take—knives or pistols?"

"It matters not to me. I am equally at home with either," said Paule, carelessly. "But as it will save time, suppose I decide on pistols."

"So be it. What distance?"

"Thirty paces. Your friend can drop a handkerchief as a signal for firing."

"Agreed. I am content," rejoined Jack.

The men had faced death too many times previously, to be afraid of the king of terrors. Their pulses beat a little quicker than usual. That was all.

This could not be wondered at, because their blood was up, but their heads were cool.

The Reverend Peter had not uttered a word.

Will Corry was asked to measure the ground. Jack would not take his eye off Paule for fear of treachery.

He knew that he could not trust the scoundrelly half-breed.

With extreme care Will went over the ground, placing a stick at each extremity for the combatants to stand at.

If he could have stopped the duel he would have been glad to do so.

That, however, was out of the question.

"Parson," said Paule.

"Do you appeal to me to settle your differences?" asked Stiggins.

"Only in one sense. You're a witness that this is going to be a fair and square fight."

"Yea, verily; though it is much to be deplored."

"You are also a witness to the fact that I did not seek the quarrel."

"Of a truth, that is so. Canadian Jack is a man of wrath. Like the war horse he snuffeth the battle afar off, and will not be denied."

"That is good enough," said Paule.

"Blessed are the peacemakers. Is it not written that their's is the kingdom of heaven? May I not interpose my good office?" asked the reverend gentleman.

"It is useless," rejoined Jack.

"Say not so, my brother."

"The duel must take place."

(To be continued. Commenced in No. 21.)

THE PROGRESS of the BRITISH BOY.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHILIP of Spain was so unpopular that he could not reside in England. He, however, found means to pay Mary a short visit in the year 1557, and by some means or other persuaded her into a declaration of war with France.

An expedition was sent, consisting of one thousand cavalry, four thousand foot soldiers, and two thousand pioneers. This force was under the command of the Earl of Pembroke.

At the first outset a moderate amount of success attended them; but as they were mixed up with Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and others, they soon began to feel reverses.

The greatest loss of all was that of the town of Calais, and the last remnant of the immense possession the English monarch once possessed on the other side of the Channel.

It seemed as though all the glory of the Plantagenet monarchs was to be obscured by the ill-fortune of their successors, and that the high name gained by the English for valour and endurance had gone from them.

The siege of Calais commenced on New Year's day—January 1st, 1588, and in eight days the town and fortifications surrendered.

Thus the English lost that town which had cost Edward III. an obstinate siege of eleven months, and which the English had kept possession of through all the varieties of their changing fortune for a space of two hundred and eleven years.

Queen Mary was sorely grieved at the news, and still more so when she heard the subsequent events which took place.

For the French, being flushed with victory, immediately marched to the town and fort of Guisnes, where they were boldly resisted by Lord Grey de Wilton, who had only about four hundred Spanish and Burgundian soldiers under his command. But in a few days the walls of the place were completely shattered, and the garrison was forced to yield to the conquerors.

The English raised a fleet to succour their countrymen, but there came such fearful weather that the expedition could not sail; "wherefore, some said that the same was done by necromancy, and that the devil was raised up and become French."*

Some short time after this the French marched against the little castle of Ham, the only place which the English held on French soil.

From this spot the captain of the castle fled with his garrison into Flanders, so that the triumph of the French was perfect.

The English fleet, however, sailed up and down the French coast and inflicted a great deal of damage, though they achieved no particular triumph.

And so the miserable quarrel went on from month to month.

But the queen, who commenced the war, was not destined to see it concluded, for in September, 1558, Mary fell sick of a kind of ague of which it is supposed she died, though others, "by her much sighing before her death supposed she died of thought and sorrow."

Queen Mary's council seeing her sighing, and desiring to know the cause to the end they might administer more ready consolation to her, feared, as they said, that she took some

thought for the King's Majesty, her husband, which was gone from her.

To whom answering again, indeed (said she), that may be one cause, but that is not the greatest wound that pierceth mine oppressed mind; but what it was she would not express to them. Albeit afterwards she opened the matter more plainly to Mistress Rise and Mistress Clarentius (if it be true that they told me which heard it of Mistress Rise herself), who being then most familiar with her and most bold about her, told her that they thought she took heart for King Philip's departing from her. Not only that (said she), but when I am dead and opened, you shall find Calais written on my heart.*

On the 17th day of November, in the year 1558, she died at Westminster, at the age of forty-three years and nine months, having reigned five years, four months, and eleven days.

One good thing she did, or rather wished to do: by her will she allotted the sum of 400 marks per annum for the building and endowment of a "house or hospital within or nigh the City of London for the relief of poor and old soldiers, notably such as have been or shall be hurt or maimed in the war and service of this realm."

The death of Queen Mary was kept concealed from the public for some hours; but as Parliament happened to be sitting at the time, the Archbishop of York went down to the



"THE SENTINELS WHO SHOULD HAVE WATCHED
NEGLECTED THEIR DUTY."

House of Lords at noon and sent from thence to the Speaker of the House of Commons, desiring him to come immediately to the upper house, with the knights and burgesses, to give assent to a measure of very great importance.

When they arrived, the announcement was made of Mary's death, and that the Lady Elizabeth, second daughter of Henry VIII., was the true successor.

Lady Elizabeth was acknowledged at once by both Houses with shouts of "God save Queen Elizabeth; long and happy may she reign!"

This being done, the next thing was to proclaim her, which ceremony took place first of

* Grafton's Chronicles.

* Holinshed's Chronicles, vol. 3, p. 1160.

all before the door of Westminster Hall, "where after several soundings of trumpets, made in most solemn manner, they proclaimed the new queen by this name and title:

"Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queene of Englande, France, and Irelande, Defender of the Faith, &c.," to the great comfort and rejoicing of the people, as by their manner and countenances well appeared.

Such, at least, is the account which Holinshed gives of the event, and as he lived at that time there can be no reason for doubting his word.

Church bells were set ringing, tables were set in the streets, casks of ale broached, and at night bonfires were made in many parts of the town.

Elizabeth was at Hatfield when the news reached her. Her first act was to fall on her knees; her first words, to exclaim in Latin: "A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile, oculis nostris."* These same words were afterwards stamped upon the gold coin issued by her.

On the 28th of November, 1558, the new queen entered the city at Cripplegate, and rode in state along the wall to the Tower, where she remained till the 5th of December, when she removed to Somerset House.

On the 14th of December she was crowned with more than usual pomp and grandeur; the lord mayor and citizens were lavish of their money, and the artists of all kinds exhausted their skill to contribute to the magnificence of the procession, decorations, and ceremony.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth was like her coronation, one of peculiar grandeur.

Men's thoughts and actions were just beginning to be free from the bondage of the feudal system, and naturally their ideas expanded. Even the universe itself seemed to expand with their thoughts.

For in the reign of Elizabeth English sailors sailed far and near, searching out new lands and planting the English flag on shores where white faces had never before been seen. Such men were Drake, Fro-bisher, and Raleigh—worthy sons of this great land.

Great statesmen too adorned the land, with scholars and philosophers to match. Look at Burleigh and Bacon.

Such men as these made England great; for the first thought in their minds was the safety and honour of their country.

Nor had the age of chivalry entirely passed away. What knight of old ever displayed a more gentle heroism than that shown by the English Christian, poet, and soldier



"DARNLEY'S LANCE STRUCK MURRAY FULL ON THE FRONT OF THE HELMET."

—Sir Philip Sidney, who refused the cup of water, in order that the sufferings of a poor wounded comrade might be relieved?



"MAITLAND PLUNGED HIS DAGGER INTO ERSKINE'S HEAD."

And great poets too lived in that time. Edmund Spencer—the widely renowned author of the "Faerie Queene"—who flou-

The young Queen of Scotland, Mary Stuart, had been married at a very early age to the eldest son of the French King, who looked on his young daughter-in-law as rightful heir to the English throne, or, at all events, pretended to do so.

Elizabeth was well aware of the intention of the French monarch to carry out these views, if possible, and therefore very naturally took every step she could to prevent it.

One method was by fanning the civil and religious dissensions which then raged in Scotland, during the absence of the young queen, who then resided in France with her husband.

In the course of time, however, that husband died, and other circumstances, combined with that, made it necessary for Mary Stuart to return to her own country.

The return was not productive of the good results which had been anticipated, for the stern Scots disliked the artificial polish



"THE COMBATANTS MET ON HORSEBACK, ARMED WITH SWORDS."

* "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

and refinement which Mary had acquired in the French court.

Mary Queen of Scots, however, was inclined to marry one of her nobles, the Lord Darnley, who, as soon as he found the queen favourably disposed towards him, offered his hand without delay.

Darnley's pretensions to the hand of the Queen of Scots were opposed by the Earl of Murray. To such a pitch did the spirit of rivalry between these two barons rise, that at length they met in combat to decide who should be the Queen's chief adviser.

Darnley's lance was successful, for he struck Murray full on the front of the helmet, and for a time disabled him.

So for a time Murray was left in the shade.

The marriage, however, took place on the 29th of July, 1565, in the chapel of Holyrood Palace, Darnley having been proclaimed king the previous evening.*

Many of those who opposed the marriage were outlawed, Murray being among the number, though he endeavoured, through Rizzio, an Italian musician, to keep in favour, and even gave the Italian a valuable present to secure his interest.

Soon Mary began to care nothing about her husband, who in turn was jealous of the Italian Rizzio.

So Darnley, in revenge, entered into a compact with Lords Ruthven, Morton, and others, to assassinate the foreigner.

On the 1st of March, 1566, the associates were conducted by Darnley to the apartment in which the queen was seated at supper, Rizzio being there.

Rizzio was slain; and a full account of the barbarous action will be found in No. 5 of this journal.

So determined was Queen Mary to revenge the death of her favourite that Morton, Ruthven, and others were compelled to fly to England in order to escape, and the banished Murray was once more restored to favour.

Poor Darnley was all this time getting as deeply as possible into the mire.

The hatred the Lords Murray, Bothwell, Maitland, and others bore Darnley was so great that they endeavoured to persuade Mary to be divorced from him. But that step she declined to take.

Maitland found it necessary to fly to England. But he too thought it necessary to appeal to arms before leaving his country, so a combat was fought between him and the Earl of Mar's cousin—a gentleman named Erskine, who had taken a prominent part in the politics of the period.

In this case lances were not used, but the combatants met on horseback armed with swords and daggers only.

After a good deal of fencing, Maitland was dismounted, but he contrived to keep his feet, and rushing in upon his antagonist he plunged his broad dagger into Erskine's head.

Then he hastened away to England to be safe from Queen Mary's vengeance.

Nevertheless, the nobles had a meeting in secret, and it seems that a few days afterwards Darnley was taken very ill of a disease resembling small pox; this circumstance has been converted by Mary's enemies into an attempt on her part to poison him.

The sick victim was removed to a house in the suburbs of Edinburgh—for the benefit of his health it was said.

A guard was sent to take care of the house and its inmate, but those who should have watched were bribed, and spent their time in laughing and chatting, while the enemies were at work in the rear of the building.

The result was that Darnley's foes succeeded in blowing up the house with gunpowder; and thus his career came to a close.

(To be continued. Commenced in No. 1.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LETTERS to be answered in this column should be addressed to "The Editor."

In consequence of the great time taken in printing each number of this journal, correspondents must not be surprised if they have to wait a long while for the answers to their questions.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts unless stamps are sent for that purpose.

MARGUERITE.—1. Your namesake, made famous by Goethe, could not have been more beautiful both physically and morally. You are far above the average in polite accomplishments, and doubtless cause many a heartache among the gentlemen of your acquaintance who are striving to gain that priceless boon—the possession of your hand and heart. 2. Writing, spelling, grammar, and composition are all excellent. 3. The dark-brown tress is in full harmony with your beautiful complexion.

W. H. (Port Jefferson) writes: "Is there any motion that will maintain itself? If so, how long will it run, and what is such a motion called?" If there were a motion that could "maintain itself," it might run for ever, and would be entitled to be called perpetual motion. But there is no such motion, and in the nature of things there cannot be any.

AUBALERA writes: "Please let me know if when a girl is sixteen she can choose for herself if she wants to do right, and is not longer under the control of her parents." A girl is under the legal control of her parents until she becomes twenty-one years old, unless she gets married before she arrives at that age.

WILHELMINA (Burlington) writes: "Will you please inform me what would keep my hair from getting darker, as I prefer it lighter? Also, what will increase its growth, and keep it from coming out?" If your hair has a tendency to grow darker, there is nothing which will stop it from doing so. By living so as to keep yourself in good health, and by keeping your scalp clean, your hair will be kept in good condition, and will not be apt to come out.

E. G. L. (Manchester) writes: Which is the larger city, London or Pekin? I think Pekin is the larger, but my father says London is. Your father is right. London is the largest city on the globe.

DURWAN (Brooklyn) writes: "How long should a lady and gentleman keep company with each other before they become engaged, and how long after the engagement before they get married?" There is no fixed rule for such affairs. The lovers and their respective families should be able to determine both questions, according to the particular circumstances of the case.

C. H. writes: "Please solve and explain the following example: In two bins there are fifty-four bushels. In one bin there are six bushels less than half as much as there are in the other bin. How many bushels in each bin?" We will tell you the answer, and leave you to work out the problem for yourself: There are forty bushels in the large bin, and fourteen bushels in the small one.

F. H. S.—By gradually heating a coin the inscription will, in the majority of cases, make its appearance. Copper coins may be cleaned by immersing in sweet oil and wiping dry with a clean rag. If of silver, they should be placed for ten or fifteen minutes in a strong solution of ammonia and wiped dry with a soft towel.

RALPH AMBER.—Victor Hugo's prose and verse writings are powerful, vivid, and brilliant, and he was endowed with a great wealth of imagination and command of dramatic effect. Notwithstanding this, his works are often marred by extravagance both in thought and diction. His greatest works are generally conceded to be "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "Les Misérables," which appeared in 1862, and "Marion Delorme" is his ablest drama. He was the author of humorous works—so many, in fact, that we could not devote space to an enumeration of them. A bookseller in your neighbourhood will furnish a catalogue of these, or can put you in the way of obtaining one. As a philosopher, Hugo never took a very high rank.

IDA L. S.—Having a large supply of literary material on hand furnished by experienced writers, we are compelled to decline the acceptance of your manuscripts, which, as amateur productions, are not without merit. Manuscripts intended for publication should never be written on both sides of the paper, and stamps for their return should always be inclosed.

A SUBSCRIBER.—Wear soft easy boots, bathe the feet frequently with warm water, and pare away as much of the corn as possible, taking care not to draw the blood. If the corn is very sensitive, it should be touched occasionally with lunar caustic; if inflamed, apply a warm bread poultice.

J. A. NEWMAN.—You will have to pass a severe examination for the place you are anxious to obtain, and you must improve very much in your caligraphy.

A. B. MILLINGTON.—You had better article yourself to a professional draughtsman, who would teach you how to draw on wood.



GREAT and unusual excitement reigned in the "Hunter's Rest" on the night of the meeting of the guests under the Old Oak Tree.

All had assembled except Mr. Molesworthy, and the guest of the evening, Corporal Standfast. Old Ben Blount kept moving about with a fidgety air, looking at his watch, the gift of his great grandfather.

"What's the matter with the watch, Ben," said old Mort, "you don't think you can make the time go faster or slower by looking at it, do you?"

"No, no, Adam," replied Ben, "but we may be slow, you know," he said, pointing to the clock.

"Ah! that's what a great many think; but Old Father Time be fast enough for all of us; he's a pretty regular traveller, and when we are least aware of it, steals a march upon us; and

"March! ah, that's what I was thinking on. I wonder whether Corporal Standfast will forget to march here to-night?" said Mr. Switcher, the schoolmaster.

"And why not?" said Mr. Molesworthy, who had entered unperceived by the others; "he gave his word he would be here, and my life upon it he won't fail."

"Good evening, sir; good evening," said the rest of the company.

"Good evening, my friends," he replied, taking his seat, "you remember the corporal, who was a most gentlemanly person, said he was on a furlough, and was going on a visit to a sister who lived nearly one hundred miles from this spot, and by nine this evening he would be here to add his mite of amusement."

At that moment the clock struck, and there stood the corporal. He gave the salute and marched as steadily up to the tree as though on parade.

"Military time, gentlemen; punctual as a bullet to its destination," and so saying he marched up to a seat in the centre of the group, and seating himself, lifted the tankard.

"A good health to you all, gentlemen, and I hope trouble will always be a long day's march behind you all," and he took a hearty pull.

"Well, gentlemen," said the corporal, "I'll tell you what happened to me when in the Crimea, and which I call

The Spectre of the Alma,

for it was at the Alma it happened.

"You see, when the news came down to the barracks that war had broken out, and we were soon to be on the march, there was a number of us didn't believe it, a number that didn't want to go, and a number that danced and sang at the very thought of it.

"Those that didn't want to go did not hold back for want of pluck; no, no; their wives had some little business of their own; they had formed tender and dear ties, and—nonsense, what right can a soldier have to those? he must go where duty calls—

"And mustn't shrink or show the white feather. Well, one morning we fell in, and not a man was missing in the ranks. Prince Albert came down to see and wish us good-bye, and the Queen, God bless her, gave us a parting salute. The band struck up, and away we went, shouting as though we'd shake the houses down.

"I thought it strange men should be so jolly

when more than half were marching to their graves; but such is human nature.

"I was as bold as any of them, but I couldn't shout; I was leaving those behind me that I loved as dear as life, and the chances were a hundred to one against my ever seeing them again."

"On we went through the streets, while thousands of throats shouted out 'good byes' and 'God bless yous,' and as many, and more, pairs of hands were grasping ours—hands that many a gallant fellow never clasped again."

"The fortune of war," broke in Tom Hawser.

"At last we gained the station, and then came the stern trial; many a wife and mother fainted, and fell down among the crowd, and the shrieks of the poor girls, torn from the arms of those they felt they would never see again, fell like ice upon the hearts of all."

"Ah! I remember when I first sailed, my Sue hung about my neck like—like a—"

"Order, order, order!" was the cry.

"Order it is," growled out Hawser.

"Well, we were not long before we reached the seat of war; we were not long before the shot came flying among us, and told us the ball had opened; and we were not long before it had played such havoc amongst us that I was a full corporal."

"We gained the heights of Alma; but what a price we paid for it. On that day the officers of every regiment showed of what metal they were; young men, who had only the reputation of being dandies, and fit only for the ball-room, fought like lions."

"I saw one of them, a mere boy—engaged hand to hand with two Russians; one he made bite the dust, when the other cowardly ruffian shot him down with a revolver. He didn't get off, though, for I sent a bullet through him that stopped him from ever dancing again."

"That's, as us sailors say, *Quid pro*," cried old Hawser.

"Order, order," said old Adam Mort.

"Well, the battle over, to find quarters was the next thought, and we were not far from what we thought would turn out very snug ones."

"Close to where we had been stationed was a large house, completely shut up, as if deserted by its former occupiers. Strong wooden shutters were closed from the basement up to the third storey, and the only injury it had received was where a twenty-four pounder came rattling against one of them, and opened the shutter in a jiffy. We were too busy to take much notice of that."

"I was left behind in charge of some of the wounded, and, of course, I wasn't long getting them into a place where they could be attended to; the house was the very thing; and so, not seeing any owner to ask permission, we opened another of the shutters, and then the door, and took possession in as quiet and orderly a manner as possible."

"When we let the daylight in, there was a feeling of wonder and amazement at the splendid manner in which the rooms were furnished. I can tell you, my friends, those Russian gents know how to make their houses comfortable; marble, gold, china, the most costly silks, mirrors from ceiling to floor, carpets your feet were lost in, vases whose crystal seemed glittering like frosted silver, all—all were there, but not a soul to give us a welcome. That we didn't care much about; we did that for ourselves."

"In less than a quarter of an hour the palace was converted into a hospital, that is, the ground-floor; we found plenty of food, wine, brandy, and many other comforts, and so, after the brave fellows who had been wounded had been made as easy as we could, we, who had to watch over them, began to think of ourselves."

"I placed a sentry at the back and front of the building, and then, taking the first watch upon myself, made the others lie down, for they had passed through a day of peril, and required rest; for myself, I felt little or no fatigue, and so I sat and pondered over what had passed, and then my thoughts reverted back to old England, and those I'd left behind, and then I bethought me that I had never gone through the upper rooms."

"I rose up, and taking up a revolver that laid upon the table, and a light, I ascended the broad and handsome staircase, wondering at the priceless things that adorned the walls, and thinking what a pang it must have cost the owners when they left them."

"Opening a door I passed into a room which ran the length of the house from front to back; it was equally as magnificently furnished as the rooms below, with the exception that in one corner of the room there stood a splendid harp that seemed shining with gems and gold."

"I walked cautiously to the window at the back, and pulling aside the heavy curtains that hung before it, looked out."

"It was a heavenly sight; the gardens seemed of great extent, at the end of which ran a lake with trees so interlaced on each side as to form a water-nymph's bower."

"The moon, high in the heavens, shone with a mild light over the scene, while far beyond the heights of Alma the watch-fires shed their ruddy glow; but the harmony of the scene vanished when the groan of some poor wounded fellow sounded on the ear, or a shriek of dying agony rang through the air. I had opened the window to look upon the scene when suddenly a current of air blew in the room, and I was in darkness. At the same moment I heard a noise behind me as though a key was turning in the lock of a door. I turned hastily round, and, fearing some treachery, elevated the revolver, when suddenly at the far end of the room a door slowly opened and a man appeared bearing in his hand a small lamp, the light from which shone with a peculiar blue reflection upon his face."

"It looked like the face of one risen from the grave."

"Very like, very like," groaned old Adam Mort, the sexton, "badly made."

"Be silent, Adam," said Mr. Molesworthy.

"As my mattock, sir," was the reply.

"He was apparently a young man, and the black velvet dressing-gown that he wore threw out the ghastly face of its wearer in strong relief."

"No pure snow was ever whiter than that man's face; his black eyes shone out with a fierce lustre, like stars on a dark night; his beard and thick moustache were black as the raven's wing."

"His hair hung down in masses on his shoulders. At the sight of this strange apparition, I sank down behind a marble statue, close to the window, and so concealed myself from view."

"He placed the light down upon a malachite table and walked slowly towards the window (and seemed somewhat surprised at finding it open), muttered some indistinct words. He then stood with folded arms gazing out upon the lake."

"Wilt thou come to-night, Adele?" he murmured. "I have not seen thee for a long dreary month, although I have watched the lake in which thou liest, night after night until the rising sun has paled the stars and outshone their light in the glorious majesty of his own. Thou wilt come to-night, for my dreams have been of thee, and I have heard thee whisper 'Forgiven;' for the last time, say dearest that thou wilt come this night, that to-morrow I may join thee."

"And throwing himself down upon his knees, he seemed praying, with clasped hands."

"I had risen, and stood close behind him, when suddenly I saw, at the farther end of what seemed the bower, a light not bigger than a star, high up in the heavens."

"He started wildly to his feet."

"What seemed to be the star gained in brilliancy, and what was my surprise to see, walking upon the water, but a female of more than mortal beauty, and bearing in her arms a child."

"Her long hair hung in tresses, shining in gleams of gold; the lips seemed to part, as though words issued from them; one hand was partly bent, as pointing to the lake."

"Forgiven!" he murmured. "I join thee!"

"He was about to spring out, when I seized him with a strong hand, and pointing the pistol at him, rendered him powerless."

"You are my prisoner," I said.

"He looked fixedly at me for an instant."

"You are an English soldier," he replied.

"I am."

"Tis well; I can trust you. Are you alone?"

"No; the place below is filled with many of my wounded and dying comrades."

"I heard the fierce battle raging around me, but heeded it not," he said. "My servants fled,

and left me alone. It is of little consequence; I shall not require them again. Follow me to my room. You have seen to-night what no mortal eye but mine own ever gazed upon; I would tell you all about it."

"Listen to me, Englishman," he said, in a clear, melodious voice. "I am a nobleman of the highest order in the Russian empire, my wealth almost fabulous, and my power nearly equal to a throned monarch."

"I am young, and still blessed with health, although my sins and sorrows have been heavy, and all brought on by that curse of man—a headstrong will, a passion devastating as the whirlwind."

"If we could only think in that headstrong passion of youth of the misery entailed upon us, we should pause—aye, pause."

"What is the youth of man without judgment and reasoning?"

"My father—a wild, passionate man—sowed the seeds in boyhood that after sprang up into a fruitful tree of lawless passion."

"With me, and to me, was every wish and order obeyed; cringing serfs and slaves crowded round me and were spurned."

"Could I have seen in my boyhood's days the bright smile from a mother's eyes—ah! then, perhaps, it might have been different."

"A mother! ah, the magic in that name, the lovely, the only green spot in after age, the mother, loved even in the tottering steps of the child, when decay and old age have seized him, loved when manhood's sight has dawned upon him or the loveliness has lighted upon her."

"He paused, and looking earnestly upon me for a moment, continued—"

"Soldier, you are an Englishman; that name is sufficient to carry respect through the world."

"Your long dreary march through it has been full of those glorious deeds we here only read of, but from the moment the Boys of England, or Ireland, or Scotland, determine to do and act, they are at once inscribed upon the deathless scroll of Fame that hands down immortality and only ends in extinction."

"With an emotion indescribable, he paused."

"Sir," I said, "I am only a plain soldier, and I can hardly tell you how I became one."

"The plough tail I came from, although my father was an innkeeper; and I suppose that gave me an inkling for grape shot. But I was always a rough, careless lad, and I thought that the land we live in wanted defenders, and so upon that I left the plough and—"

"Yes," he said waving his hand, "it was better—all men have their destiny; mine has been the destiny of passion, there's no altering that. You see these noble walls, the matchless paintings, the—all, all that can add a charm to life and gild the dreary scenes of existence! All these are mine!"

"But the headlong self-will that seized upon me when a boy has kept upon me as a man, and I have suffered—aye, and deeply."

"Listen to a tale that perhaps may make you hate, but yet may enlist a sympathy. The roar of the battle to-day has not excited me. My time is to-morrow."

"The shadow that you saw to-night" (and here he shuddered, and bent his head low before the altar) "was—was—my wife and child" (he stopped to wipe the clammy drops from off his brow). "I am calmer now, and will finish the record of my crime."

"We were married, and lived happily. In the regiment I commanded was a young officer of great personal beauty and fascinating manners."

"In a fatal moment I gave him the *entrée* to my palace, and from that time my peace of mind fled—the demon Jealousy took possession of me, and from that hour I was a fiend. Had not a devilish passion taken possession of me, had I asked an explanation all would have been well; but no, I gloated in seeing them together, and lived hours and days of unutterable torment, and all brought on by myself."

"I did all I could to feed the fearful phantom I myself had created."

"Poor, poor Adele perceived not this; to her I was the same kind, indulgent husband; alone, I was nursing the vulture in my bosom that was destroying me piece meal."

"Here he paused as though his last moment had come."

"I brought them to this place, I watched them, and placed spies about them, who brought me lying reports for the gold I poured into their laps; and so I went on delighting and glorying in my own self-created misery; but the disease soon got the master, and fierce, ungovernable madness reigned in its stead.

"In the lowest depth of that lake, I hurled the fair and gentle beings I loved; in those fair, peaceful waters, I cast all my joys of life—all of here and hereafter.

"Three long years have passed, and on the vigil of that night, when I stained my soul with blood and crime, her shade has arisen and called me to her.

"In this room have I passed the sad weary hours of my life, attended by only one man (who, alarmed by the approach of hostile foes, fled); here, in this room only, have I lived in fasting, prayer, and penitence, the fierce, headstrong passion sunk at last in the miserable victim of its act which you see before you.

"Leave me now, and for ever; but bear with you this, producing a small ivory case, 'in token that we once met.'

"I bowed, and was about retiring, when he motioned me.

"When do the wounded men leave my place?"

"By daybreak, or, perhaps, at once. We join the main army."

"'Tis well," he sunk down on his knees before the altar. 'Farewell!'

"I left the room, and rejoined my comrades just as the ambulances drove up.

"In an hour we had left the house, and marched slowly on.

"Gaining one of the mountain heights, I lingered for a moment to gaze upon the place where I had seen the 'Spectre of the Alma' and the wretched being, the victim of headstrong and

had disappeared, and in its place was nought but desolation, ruin, and horror. He had destroyed them and himself.

"The case contained sufficient to make me and mine happy for life, and I shall always have reason to remember the Spectre of the Alma."

The corporal ceased, and when the applause had subsided, the gate opened, and a man appeared blackened and be-rimed.

"It's only I, gemmen; the missis said she thought I be welcome."

"What, Tom Potts, the tinker?" said the antiquary.

"Yees; that be I, sir."

"Well, then, come and make one of our party; but on one condition, that at our next meeting you contribute your tale."

"With all my heart, genelmen."

And so, Tom Potts taking his seat, the evening was spent in social mirth and chat until the hour chimed for closing the meeting.

"But before we go, gentlemen," said Mr. Molesworthy, "I want to ask one question."

"What is that, sir?" asked Longdale.

"Are you all agreed hat Tom Potts shall be one of us?"

The members of the company looked at each other.

"I'll take a show of hands then; all who favour the proposition will be good enough to hold up their right hands."

As many right hands as there were people present were exhibited, and Tom was declared duly elected. (To be continued.)



"I SEIZED HIM, POINTING THE PISTOL AT HIS HEAD."

ungovernable will. In an instant there was a roar as of artillery; the air was densely filled by smoke, and through a bright scathing flame a thousand things were flying in the air.

"When it had cleared away the house no longer stood, and trees and the bower on the lake



AN elderly miss was heard to exclaim, while sitting at her toilet the other day, "I can bear adversity, I can encounter hardship, and withstand the changes of fickle fortune; but, oh! to live, and droop, and wither, and die like a single pink, I can't endure it, and, what's more, I won't."

"I SAY," cried a fashionable youth to an old usurer, "the ready is needful." "Yes," said the other, "but the needful isn't ready."

COMPLIMENTARY.—Dr. Busby, whose figure was much under the common size, was one day accosted in a coffee-room by an Irish baronet of colossal height. "May I pass to my seat, O Giant?" When the doctor, politely making way, replied, "Yes, O Pigmy!" "Oh sir," said the baronet, "my expression referred to the size of your intellect." "And my expression, sir, to the size of yours," said the doctor.

"PLEASE, sir," said a little boy to a milk vendor, "mamma says she doesn't like to buy milk of you." "Why not? Don't I give you good measure?" "Yes, sir; but mamma says you feed your cows on such watery turnips."

ONE ought to have dates at one's fingers' ends, seeing they grow upon the palm.

A DEFECTIVE FLUE.—Disappointed Pew-holder—"Deacon Stubbs, our church is in great danger from that defective flue; did you know it?" Deacon Stubbs—"Defective flue! No, where? Have you said anything to the sexton about it?" D. P.—"No, he couldn't do anything about it. I mean the minister—he don't draw well."

HOW AN ARTFUL WIFE MANAGES IT.—"Whenever I want a nice snug day, all to myself, I tell George my mother is coming, and then I see nothing of him till one in the morning."

SOME time ago a Lancashire man, well known for his shrewdness in business, a virtue which sometimes treads closely on the breach of the eighth commandment, happened to be travelling in a train accompanied by his wife when a collision occurred. His wife received a severe contusion between the eyes, for which a jury awarded £50 damages. Some time after the affair had blown over, the following confession, or something to the like effect, was elicited from the plaintiff in a moment of unguarded conviviality:—"Well, you see, when t' collision happened, t' ould woman and I war all reet, but when I looked out o' t' carriage I saw a lot o' fellies in a terrible state. One sings out, 'Ey, lad! I'se gotten me head cut open. I'll ha' twenty peownd for this.' 'Twenty peownd, ye darned fule,' cries another. 'I'se gotten my shoulder out, and I'll ha' forty peownd for't.' When I heard this," continued the clever business man, "I jumped at t' ould woman straight out, and druv my head right between her eyes, and we'se gotten fifty peownd for't."

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